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MEDITATIONS ON THE COMMUNION OFFICE

By J. G. H. Barry, D.D., Litt.D.

Volume 1

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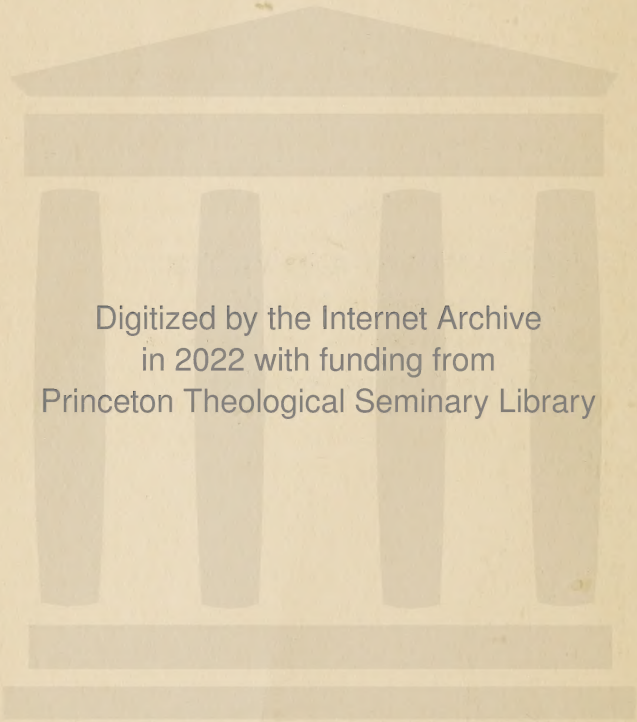

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PREFACE

Possibly some sort of explanation is necessary of the mixed nature of the contents of this book. I can only say that if it is a compound rather than a simple treatment of its subject it is because nearly forty years experience has taught me that usefulness and simplicity of treatment do not of necessity go together. Other books of meditations that I have published have been tried out in parochial use: these meditations have not been so used. Two or three of them have been published in part in the American Church Monthly, otherwise they are now published for the first time.

My friend and associate, the Rev. H. K. Pierce has kindly prepared for me the liturgical notes which I feel add materially to the value of the volume.

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THE FIRST MEDITATION

THE LORD'S PRAYER

The present Prayer Book Mass, in all its various forms, English, American, Scottish, South African, or whatever they may be, is an outgrowth of the Mass in the First Prayer Book of Edward VI. The Mass of the First Prayer Book was, so far as we know, the work of one man, Archbishop Cranmer. What he did, in the main, was to translate and adapt the ancient Latin Mass, keeping its general sense and order intact. But he did omit some of its important features, and he introduced other and novel features, some of them borrowed from the new foreign Protestantism. From an examination of his work and from our knowledge of his theological views it is evident that Cranmer's endeavor was to revise the Mass in such a way as to minimize its sacrificial character and to emphasize those features which suggest a Protestant "communion office." We may thank God that it was impossible for Cranmer to travel very far along the road of his "reforming" desires. The people of England were still Catholic and would not tolerate the suppression of the Holy Sacrifice. But Cranmer went as far as he dared in that direction. What we should remember is, that our Mass is a direct descendant of the ancient Latin Mass of the West, which was universal (with a few minor exceptions) throughout Europe. It is easy, and very misleading, to magnify the local diversities. The old English "Use of Sarum," for example, was simply the Roman Mass as used in England. Its Canon which is the heart and center, was identical with that on the continent. Its peculiarities were mostly of a minor nature. Of course it had its own calendar, with commemorations of saints especially English, just as, to-day, the calendar followed in France differs from that of Spain or Italy.

Let us listen to the words of our Lord:

Where two or three are gathered together in my Name, there am I in the midst of them.

Let us picture to ourselves:

A CONGREGATION gathered for the early communion. It is a village church on a cold winter morning. There is but a dim, grey morning light, that filters in through the pale windows. You are conscious of fields of snow outside stretching away to pine covered hills. Now and again the silence is broken by the sharp crack of the frost. The slow drift of the smoke from the chimneys here and there tells you that the village is slowly waking up. It is warm in here; there is the acrid odor of pine-branches, for the Christmas season is not yet over. The flame of the candles on the altar cuts sharply through the dusk. The white and gold vestments of the priest and the red cassock of the server are accents on the dun half-light of the chancel.

There is a small congregation; a couple of men, a dozen women, a few children. They kneel in the dusk, with bowed heads, listening to the words that come softly from the altar—This is my Body that is given for you: This is my Blood that is shed. They go forward to receive the Holy Gifts. They kneel again and receive the peace of God; and then go out into the winter morning. It is day now; the sun touches the hill top; the snow sparkles in its light. It is light too in their hearts, for

the Divine Presence is there to illumine their minds and fill their souls with the joy of union with their Maker and Redeemer.

Consider, first,

This that we have been looking at is a meeting of the Christian Brotherhood. They are all one in Christ Jesus. They have partaken of the Sacrament of Unity, and have thereby strengthened the bond that unites them to their Risen Lord and to one another. This scene, with but slightly altered circumstances, has been repeated daily for centuries. It began in that Upper Room in Jerusalem where the Lord, in the night in which He was betrayed, took Bread, and blessed it, and gave it to His disciples. It was the same Upper Room, perhaps, in which abode the Apostles, with the women, and Mary the Mother of Jesus, and his brethren; and where, after Pentecost, they continued, breaking the Bread at home. It continued in Rome in the church that was in the house of Priscilla and Aquila. The heathen governor, Pliny, found the Christians in Bythinia, meeting on a fixed day at sunrise, to sing hymns to Christ as God. They met in the Catacombs to celebrate their mysteries on the altar-tomb of some loved martyr. When they had liberty they built splendid Basilicas and mighty Cathedrals to enshrine their worship; but it was still the same worship that had begun in the Upper Room in Jerusalem. To-day, over the face of Christendom the same meetings take place; we join in them, as the Christian Brotherhood, still singing hymns to Christ as God, and binding ourselves to Christ and to one another by the reception of the Flesh that is meat indeed, and the Blood that is drink indeed.

Consider, second,

This is the Body of Christ—a supernatural Body. The Church of God is composed of those who have been baptised into Christ, and are thereby regenerated and made partakers of the divine nature. They gather to their worship, not as individuals, seeking their own ends, but as the Body of Christ bent on a common worship—the offering of the One Sacrifice forever, that thereby they "may obtain remission of their sins and all other benefits of his passion." They receive the "Most precious Body and Blood" of their Head, in order that they, the members, "may be filled with grace and heavenly benediction, and made one Body with him, that he may dwell in them and they in him." The "two or three," the little congregation in the village church, are one with the "Holy church throughout all the world." Visibly, they are but a minority of the people in this place: invisibly, they are one with the faithful through all the world, nay, with the sainted dead; and their worship is a common worship "with angels and archangels and all the company of heaven."

Let us therefore pray,

To realize our privilege as members of the Christian Brotherhood, and partakers of the Christian Mysteries.

O Blessed Jesus, who in the Sacrament of the Altar has left us a memorial of thy passion; grant us so to celebrate the Sacred Mysteries of thy Body and Blood, that we may ever perceive within ourselves the fruits of our redemption; through the same Jesus Christ, our Lord.

The Lord's Prayer

I wonder if one of our troubles is not that we are too familiar with God. Have we lost largely the sense of awe? The fear of God is so obvious a spiritual quality in the saints, is so outstanding a feature in all Biblical teaching, and is so lamentably absent from our present day preaching. No doubt the spiritual quality we are indicating is not servile fear or terror, but awe, a deep sense of the majesty, the uniqueness, of God: but have we not in great measure lost this? Do we not indeed minimize those aspects and doctrines of the Christian religion which inspire religious fear? We have become so terrorized under the browbeating of infidelity and "liberalism" that we hardly dare mention hell; we preach a placid, good-natured Deity Who is conceived as making life as smooth for us as He can. We stress continually the quality of love, but our conception of love becomes more and more colorless until it fades into a toneless sentimentalism. Surely this is spiritually disastrous. Surely the conception of love as found embodied in our Lord is virile and energetic, is a passion which sends Him into the world to face ignominy and poverty and distress and death. Surely, if we have love of this temper we count on an answering love in God which is also justice. If it is a love that is willing to endure suffering it is also a love which will not shrink from requiring suffering in those who are associated with Him: if it is a love that bears a Cross it is a love which will not hesitate to require cross-bearing in those who would follow: if it is a love that abandons all it will not hesitate to demand that the disciple sell all as the preparation for discipleship. The spectacle of Incarnate

Love, gaunt and naked and dying upon the Cross brings home the meaning of the saying: "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son," and that is a love which inspires not sentimental services, but drives us to our knees in awe and holy fear. God is the "God of my joy and gladness" but He is discovered to be such after we have passed through the gate of a broken and contrite heart.

This sense of awe and reverence is best inspired, I think, by the thought of God the Blessed Trinity,—of God so far as we can think of Him *in Himself*. God is Spirit: "no man hath seen God at any time"; He is One "who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see." Within this splendor of the divine Unity there is a Trinity of Persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit: and these, the eternal Three in One, are impelled by love to enter upon the work of man's salvation. The Father sends the Son to be the Saviour of the world: the Son sends the Holy Spirit to be His Vicar in His Kingdom on earth. But there is no division in the divine Unity, and where One is, there also are Three; and what One does, that also is done by Three—and what is done by the Three in One is done for each individual human soul. As we strive to take in this fact, shall we not be filled with the deepest love, which at the same time is deepest awe and reverence? The Psalmist catches the two aspects of our thought: "O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness: let the whole earth stand in awe of Him."

I dwell upon these things as a prelude to our study because our first step is that of preparation, of preparation to meet God. Entering upon the study of the Com-

munion Office we understand that the service we have before us is essentially a *service of meeting.* "O send out thy light and thy truth that they may lead me: and bring me unto thy holy hill and to thy dwelling, and that I may go unto the altar of God, even unto the God of my joy and gladness," the priest is praying as he stands at the foot of the altar. And we, too, in our place, are repeating in substance at least, the same prayer. We are praying that this meeting with God, the God Who is presently coming to the altar, in fulfilment of His promises, may be to us joy and gladness. And we wait with bowed heads and stilled hearts as the awe of the divine Presence falls upon us. "Lord, I am not worthy that Thou shouldest come under my roof, but speak the word only and Thy servant shall be healed." The healing we feel must precede the coming. The Lord must come to a clean place.

Are *we* prepared, then, we ask ourselves, as we see the preparation of the priest. What, just, do we mean by preparation for the Mass? We are drawing near unto God. God is about to come to us with a Presence so intimate that we conceive of It as indwelling. For some moments after our Communion we shall be living tabernacles of the Blessed Trinity. We have known that this was to be, we have purposed to make our Communions on such and such a day. What have we been doing to prepare ourselves for so stupendous a moment?

There are a number of elements which enter into the preparation for Holy Communion. There is in the first place what we generally call the distant or remote preparation; we might also call it the habitual preparation, for it consists essentially in keeping ourselves in a state of grace. Naturally, we do not conceive of the life of

the Christian as a series of curves, passing from a state of sin to a state of grace, and back again, any more than we conceive of a normal life as a series of journeys from home to hospital and back again. Accident may befall any life and one may find one's self in a hospital, but one looks to get out permanently. So one looks to keep out of mortal sin and abide in a state of grace. But this keeping in a state of grace is the habitual preparation for the Eucharist, it is a state that has to be maintained, and other Eucharists are the chief help in its maintenance: but the effectiveness of the Eucharist is increased by the receptivity of our souls at the time of reception. Hence we cannot and ought not simply to assume that we are in a state of grace and therefore prepared; but we are bound by our reverence for the Hidden Presence to use all means to assure the best possible preparation, the highest possible receptivity.

It is elementary that respect for self, not to say respect for God, requires a certain physical preparation. Attendance at a royal or presidential reception requires a certain preparation of the person and of the dress: surely, attendance upon the King of kings requires no less. Not, to be sure, elaborate dress,—that would be quite out of place—but dress that marks a sense of cleanliness and order. It is not necessary to dwell on that further than to say that the child should be carefully taught the need of such physical preparation as a part of his training to become a communicant. Reverence is not a natural virtue; it must therefore be taught.

A second element of physical preparation is fasting. From the earliest times it has been the custom of the Church to receive the Blessed Sacrament as the first food of the day, to receive fasting from the midnight before

the reception. This was, perhaps, the direction of S. Paul, and was among those things which he tells the Corinthians, after rebuking them for their irreverence, "I will set in order when I come." In any case the question is of the Eucharist, and has since become a matter of canon law, and is now a part of the canon law of the universal Church. In the Churches of the Anglican rite there has been and still is an enormous amount of laxity in this matter and a conspicuous failure on the part of ecclesiastical authority to uphold the law. Nowhere, perhaps, is our lack of any adequate discipline more conspicuous. But that fact, far from excusing, only lays the greater obligation upon the individual who is conscious of the mind of the Church. Certainly we have no right to indulge ourselves under the shadow of the prevailing laxity, rather must we bear clear witness to the teaching of the Church. No law of the Church ceases to be of obligation because large numbers ignore it and authority fails to enforce it; those who know are bound to obey.

In this case the grounds of the law are sufficiently obvious. Fasting before communion is an act of reverence and respect,—let us make an act of sacrifice in the self-denial that is involved. The act may seem insignificant in itself, but the significance of an act of sacrifice does not spring from its size, but from its motive. It is a small thing that we can frequently offer. It has the value both of an act of sacrifice and of an act of discipline. Moreover, the partaking of food has the effect of dulling the senses and clouding the spirit so that we are less responsive to spiritual appeal. To receive the Holy Communion after eating and after the affairs of the day have laid hold upon us is to receive in a much

less responsive and recollected state than at an earlier hour. Naturally, the earlier hour has to be guarded. There are, no doubt, households where the getting off to the early Mass is attended with rush and hurry, with shortened and distracted prayers, and undesirable mental disturbance. That can and should be avoided. Its existence is one of the phenomena of a disorderly and distracted life.

This is a preparation of the body: there is also a preparation of the mind and spirit. Of that cleansing of the soul which results in our abiding in a state of grace I shall speak elsewhere. That for the present is assumed, and I am concerned with what I may call the habitual preparation for the reception of the sacrament. We can perhaps best describe this state of preparation as a life which habitually is recollected and lived in the presence of God. A life, in other words, which is habitually using the grace which is received. The communicant who is aiming at spiritual growth knows that the growth depends on the constant use of the grace received, that the law of the spiritual life is grace for grace. There are, no doubt, communicants to whom the reception of the Communion is a pious act, an obligation of Churchmanship which has no before or after. Such Communions do not *fit in* to anything, they are a bit of spiritual politeness, and the best we can hope for them is that they work no harm because on the whole they are well-intentioned, though ignorant. With such Communions we are not concerned here: we are thinking of those which are items in a continuous spiritual experience. They distinctly fit in and are a calculated part of life. They are incidents in a life lived steadily in the consciousness of a spiritual vocation as the life of the child of

God, a life continually supported by participation in the life of God. Sacramental grace for the spirit is conceived of as of the same continuous necessity as physical food for the body. "Give us this day our daily bread," consciously covers all the needs of the human being, bodily or spiritual, and because the partaking of the Holy Communion is the reception of the very Body and Blood of Incarnate God, the act becomes the actual center toward which all life tends. Life is controlled and disciplined and shaped with reference to the act of Communion, its occupations, its very relaxations and amusements, come under the control of the dominating purpose. Conversation is restrained and quieted; thought is disciplined; all life is illumined by the sense of a Presence which, though intensified at certain moments, is never wholly lost. This is the trusting sense of the divine Presence that the Psalmist felt: "Thou art about my path, and about my bed: and spiest out all my ways. For lo, there is not a word in my tongue, but thou, O Lord, knowest it altogether." Such a life, because it is constantly in the presence of God, passes without sense of wrench or division between sacred and secular to the Communion of the Sacramental Presence.

But even such a life, taken in its highest development, does not feel that it can dispense with preparation of a concrete sort as the preface to the act of communion, and, indeed, such a life least of all. In proportion as we realise the meaning of our Lord's Presence in the Sacrament of the altar shall we feel the need of preparation to approach Him. To feel little or no need of preparation is to feel little or no reality in the Presence. We therefore resort to means of preparation which look, not

to any general Communion with our Lord, but to the receiving of Him at some special time.

Just what the preparation is to be in detail is largely a matter of individual preference. It may involve the felt need of confession, of which I shall speak later. It certainly involves the need of self-examination. If self-examination has been a daily practice, as surely it should be, there will be a review of the results since our last confession. And the review ought to be made with a view to determining just what our needs actually are to-day. Self-examination is apt to stop with the discovery of sins, and not go on to the discovery of remedies. But what are our needs at present we must know if our prayers are to be intelligent. We are not going to ask God to make us good. We are going to ask for light and strength to use the grace He will certainly give in such ways as will make us more like Him. I fancy we fail a good deal through indefiniteness—and indefiniteness which is the result of an unintelligent self-examination.

We will also need certain prayers. The books of devotion which are so plentiful and varied will adequately supply the need of formal prayers as a preparation for Mass. The question constantly arises as to the time of the formal preparation—whether the night before Communion or in the morning. That seems to me a question of detail,—it can only be intelligently settled in view of individual circumstances. What would seem indispensable would be an adequate time of quiet. For many, no doubt, that will be on the night before,—for others, in the morning before Mass. My own thought as to the preferable time and place would be that the immediate

preparation for Communion should be made in the church before the Blessed Sacrament and immediately before Communion. But for many that of course is not possible. Yet perhaps not so impossible for many as many think.

The habit of being on time for services seems not widely spread; I want therefore to emphasize the importance of being on time at Mass and the irreverence involved in being voluntarily late. To drift in when Mass is half over and then go to the altar to receive the Communion betrays a very inadequate conception (to put it mildly) of the sacramental act. We should be in our place in the church sometime before the service begins in order to collect our thoughts and become thoroughly recollected. If it be possible, it is well to be in church early enough to make at least part of our immediate preparation there. We have come to the place that God has appointed to meet His people. We are to take part in the act which unites heaven and earth. The One Sacrifice is to be presented and we are purposing to partake of it. There is no need to stress the wonder and the awe which are the natural accompaniments of such an act. We see the priest come to the altar and begin the service; and then we see a man or woman coming hastily in and fussily getting settled, disturbing others and himself or herself, utterly unrecollected,—and we cannot help wondering what possibly the Mass can mean to them!

The worshipper is present in what we may call an official capacity. What is taking place is the offering of the One Sacrifice by the One Body. The priest at the altar is the link between heaven and earth: he is at once the instrument of our Lord and of the Body. He is nothing apart from our Lord and he is nothing apart

from the Body. Through him the Body is offering the Sacrifice; but he is not separate from the Body and all the members of the Body are acting in unison with him. This fact implies on the part of the members of the congregation close attention to the course of the service. To engage in acts of private devotion during the action of the Mass, and to detach one's self from that action, is to decline one's place in the Body. There are other times for private devotions: now is the time of the Church's Offering: now is the time of the most stupendous act that can take place in this world; and it betrays a very inadequate notion of the nature of the act to ignore it and to busy one's self about one's private devotions. There are times and ways of bringing our private needs before our Lord in and through the Mass. I have already pointed out one of them, the habit of being early and getting our thoughts arranged and our petitions ordered in our minds before the service begins. Then there are the intervals in the service,—the time of the priest's preparation, the offertory, the Communion and so forth, when time is given for private use. If we know precisely what we want these intervals will be found sufficient.

If we know precisely what we want—this is the key to the whole matter of private devotions in connection with the Mass. Our preparation for Mass, whether we are to receive or not, should include the proposal of a definite intention. We are no doubt taking part in an act of adoration and praise and thanksgiving made by the whole Body of Christ to God the Blessed Trinity. But also, by the mercy of God, it is permitted to us to include in this offering our own needs and desires. In other words, we are permitted to offer the Sacrifice for

our own personal intention. Consider for a moment the wonder of this privilege. Jesus Christ, very God and Man, offers Himself continually for us in heaven. His Church here on earth makes the same offering, pleads the same Sacrifice. I, a member of the Church, am not only privileged to join in the offering of the Church; but I am also permitted to join to the general intention of the Church, and the particular intention of the priest who is offering, my own individual intention—I may plead my own personal needs before the Heavenly Throne in union with the One Sacrifice of my incarnate Lord. When I realise this unspeakable privilege, surely I shall carefully go over my life before Mass and determine what it is that I am going to lay before my Saviour this day. I shall not come into the church with merely a vague notion of purposing an act of worship, but I shall come with a collected and purposed petition, with my mind concentrated upon the request I am to proffer. This will remain uppermost in my mind and will be specially presented to our Lord at the moment of the consecration and also at my communion. And after the service I will thank my Lord for having heard me, and submit myself to His will.

I am inclined to dwell upon the wonder of the Mass from the point of view of personal privilege. We look back sometimes, I suppose, with a vague envy of those first disciples who gathered about our Lord. We are perhaps reading a chapter in the New Testament, and we come across some story of a talk of our Lord with the Apostles—perhaps that most wonderful of all talks in the Upper Chamber on the night of the Supper. The Book falls from the hand and the mind tries to reconstruct the wonder of the scene, dwells on the nearness

of our Lord, of His personal love, of the eager response of the Apostles. That is a splendor which has passed away forever we think: or, if it is ever to be renewed it will be under the conditions of the life of the blessed in heaven. We are shut of all that, we lead lives that are dull and colorless and uninspired. But think. To-morrow morning you may go to church and take part in the Blessed Sacrament. The Apostles were present at the offering of the Sacrifice on Calvary, but quite unknowing of the reality which was taking place. You know; you are joining in the offering of the One Sacrifice presented for the sins of the whole world. Presently you will kneel and receive the consecrated elements and go back to your place. What has happened? You have become a living Tabernacle containing Incarnate God. You can enter into a communion with your Saviour infinitely closer than was possible for the Apostles at any time before Pentecost. God is in you and you are in Him. His love for you is so great as this, that He has come to dwell with you. And while the Sacramental Presence lasts but a few moments, the union of our Blessed Lord with your soul need never be dissolved; we *evermore* dwell in Him and He in us. You can go through all the work of your day with the consciousness of the divine Presence. Whenever you will, you may pause to commune with Him. Go out, then, recollected, go out feeling that you possess the companionship of God; that God is yours and you are His:

Not every soul may hear,
Yet to the listening ear,
God's lips are ever near.

THE SECOND MEDITATION

THE COLLECT FOR PURITY

The more one studies the history and growth and development of the Mass the more one is impressed with the unfailing selective taste and judgment which has guided the Church. The liturgy is like a living body, growing, changing, developing; adding an organ here, abandoning one there, where it is no longer needed, until finally the perfect organism is produced. Commissions for liturgical revision should realize that there is no such thing as the production, out of hand, of an ideal liturgy.

The Preparation, said by priest and server at the foot of the altar, is an instance of gradual liturgical growth. Some sort of preparatory prayers were always said. The celebrant must make himself fit, so far as that may be, for the tremendous act before him. The fixed form we now have is the latest part of the Mass, not stereotyped till in the sixteenth century. Its essence is Psalm xliii, the use of which is of course suggested by its fourth verse, and the *Confiteor*. The psalm is omitted at requiems and in Passiontide. Versicles and responses follow the absolution. The celebrant then mounts to the altar, saying as he goes a further prayer for pardon, then kisses the altar, calling on God in the name of the merits of His saints, and proceeds to the epistle corner, where the Mass proper begins. The Lord's Prayer and *Collect for Purity*, according to all old English and Western precedent, belong in the priest's private preparation before the beginning of the Mass, and some of the Prayer Book revision projects provide that they be returned to their old position, the Mass proper beginning with the Introit.

Let us listen to the words of the Psalm:

Make me a clean heart, O God: and renew a right spirit within me.

Let us picture to ourselves:

THE penitent David. In moments for real penitence sin is apt to present itself to us as ingratitude. Our minds go back over the past and recall all the mercies of God. Who more than David could recall a past glorious with marks of the divine favor? He would think of The Time when, an innocent boy, he passed his days in the fields caring for the flocks—what pleasant days they were, full of joy and the love of Jehovah. And then God took him away from the sheepfolds, that he might feed Jacob his people, and Israel his inheritance. Those first days of the kingdom, hard and worrying as they were, were still days full of the manifest favor of God. In all that long struggle with Saul, God never deserted him. He found that men could not be trusted, but he could always trust God. Then came the proud days when he was acknowledged king over all Israel, God's representative toward the people, the righteous ruler, who on earth reflects the righteousness of God. And then the plunge from the height to which he had been raised into the vilest sin. One thinks that when he shut his eyes he must always have seen the murdered Uriah. Watch David kneel there in penitence. What of all the thoughts that come to him is the bitterest?

I should think it would be those words of God in which He recalls to the fallen king all he had done for him in the past, and then adds: *And if that had been too little, I would moreover have given unto thee such and such things.* There is no limit to the bounty of God; and there is no limit to his mercy. What can the sinner do but cry: *Make me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me?*

Consider, first,

That repentance is a part of our preparation to approach God. The priests under the old law bathed themselves before they undertook their sacred ministry, signifying thereby their need of inward cleansing in their drawing near to the Most High. And we know so much more of God than they did. Our Lord has proclaimed the law of approach: *The pure in heart shall see God.* I had almost called it a terrible law—inward purity is such a difficult thing. We get stained and dusty as we go along the way of life. There are so many defiling things that our life comes in contact with every day, one feels that the cleansing of repentance is needful all the time. It is to meet this need that the Church puts in all her offices, through which we approach God with our worship, confession of sinfulness and prayer for cleansing. It is the bath before the sacrifice. There are people who resent this constant penitential attitude of the Christian; who say, impatiently, "Why are you always mourning for your sins? Your attitude kills all the joy out of life." But a Christian never feels that. One feels the failure that sin implies; but one feels, too, the pity and the love of God, when one goes to Him with the confession of one's failure. One feels

the ingratitude that sin is after one has experienced the divine blessings; but the divine blessings are renewed to the penitent—God endlessly gives us the renewal that we need. And if we go out to the battle in the morning with our armour clean and bright, and return in the evening stained with the blood and dust of the conflict, we know that as long as we keep close to God He will renew our strength; and through the ever-renewed battle we are making the partial advances that shall finally end in complete victory.

Consider, second,

Whether your attitude toward God is that of one striving to attain to inward purity of heart. So often we are content with the outward purity of conduct. David, no doubt, thought that his office of king would cover any breaches of the moral law. He was only acting as kings were accustomed to act. I do not imagine that any of his courtiers blamed his conduct or thought it strange. He did not remember that he was not like ordinary kings: he was the anointed of Jehovah. Consider, whether you have let the ordinary and customary morality of the time in any degree replace the spiritual ideals of the Beatitudes. You have quite a different standard from the world—the standard of the anointed of God, of one who has been brought near to God in the sacramental union of baptism. Not for you is the morality of this world that looketh upon the outward appearance, but the spiritual morality of the Gospel which is the application to life of the mind of Him that in judging looketh upon the heart. Consider, whether you are judging your life by this standard. If you are, surely your life is a life of penitence.

Let us pray, then,

Make me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. Pray that you may never shrink from the application to your life of the standard of the Gospel, whatever of pain and shame it may involve. Pray for grace to bring your life, with all its failures, constantly before God.

Pour out, O Lord, we beseech thee, the Spirit of grace upon us, and cast out from us whatever of evil we have incurred by the fraud of the devil, or by earthly corruption; that being cleansed within and without, we may ever render unto Thee a pure worship, and may the more readily obtain what we fitly and reasonably ask; through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

The Collect for Purity

The reason for repentance is that we may be in a fit state to meet God. We are preparing to receive our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament, and it is before all things necessary that we should be in a proper state, a state that at the least is without the stain of mortal sin. The Collect for Purity, which is a part of our personal preparation for the Communion which is to follow, goes at once to the essence of the matter in that it stresses purity as the prerequisite of our approach to God. It conceives of the worshipper as one who is deeply sensible of the divine nearness, who pictures God as seeing the very depths of his heart. The divine omniscience is a very real thing to him and he shrinks as he remembers what God, Who looks into his heart, may there see. He therefore prays for cleansing that he may be not unfit for the approach to God which is following in the Mass.

"Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts"; it goes to the very root. It is there, in that bubbling spring so out of the control of most of us, that we are conscious that our trouble lies. All sin begins in a thought; every act of rebellion against God is born in a human heart. We may well pray, then, that this source of iniquity be cleansed.

The heart in Biblical psychology stands for that which is most intimate in men, for the *foyer* of all action, of impulse toward good or evil. The hypocrite is one whose heart is removed from God, though he may profess allegiance and obedience with his lips. "Forasmuch as this people draw nigh unto me, and with their mouth and with their lips do honor me, but have removed their heart far from me, and their fear of me is a commandment of men which hath been taught them; therefore, behold, I will proceed to do a marvellous work among this people, even a marvellous work and a wonder; and the wisdom of their wise men shall perish, and the understanding of their prudent men shall be hid." On the other hand, the heart of the religious is the treasure house where the divine precepts are stored. "My son, forget not my law; but let thy heart keep my commandments." Hence the importance of keeping close watch on this priceless possession. "Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life." This is the constant note of the Old Testament (there is no need to multiply instances), and it is a note taken up and repeated by our Lord Himself in His teaching. "Out of the abundance of the heart," He teaches, "the mouth speaketh." There evil finds its point of contact with the human soul. "But the things which proceed out of the mouth come forth out of the heart; and they defile the man. For out of

the heart come forth evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, railings." The same note is sharply accentuated: "But I say unto you, that every one that looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart." And, on the other hand, the heart, stimulated by grace, is the very organ of our response to God. "And he answering said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbor as thyself."

A disciplined life, therefore, means first of all a life which is disciplined in thought. Here is no doubt the chief cause of Christian failure, that this is not so. Our thoughts run about like a flock of silly sheep, and we sit idly by like a careless herd-boy, paying no attention to their wanderings, till in peril ourselves, controlled by thought rather than controlling.

"I cannot help what I think" is the feeble wail which often meets Christian teaching on this point. One is apt to shrug one's shoulders with a movement of impatience and contempt. But there is a very large amount of truth in this seemingly feeble protest. For how stands the case? It stands thus: There is practically nothing in the education of the modern child that teaches the moral necessity of the control of thought; nothing to teach the vast importance of selecting the subjects of thought. The new school of psychologists are emphasizing the great amount of thought that human beings spend on sexual matters: is there anywhere in modern education an attempt to teach self-control in thought? Moralists begin altogether too far down the line when they confine their teaching to self-control in actions. Our Lord has the true psychology: "But I say unto you, that every

one that looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart." And St. James is equally true to nature: "but each man is tempted, when he is drawn away by his own lust, and enticed. Then the lust, when it hath conceived, beareth sin: and the sin, when it is full grown, bringeth forth death."

We wake up, most of us, sometime in adult life, to the perception that our minds are a sucking whirlpool of uncontrolled thought; that in the matter of thought we are utterly without discipline. We had imagined that control of thought at most meant the power of concentration on a selected subject; but this had meant study only, and had not been carried into the moral field. If we had gained any power of attention we had not practised it in the realm of the moral. Consequently when we were not engaged in some definite work which required all our thought for its execution, thought went its own way, and like an errant child, amused itself as it would. We wandered through the garden of life, plucking such flowers and fruits as attracted us, without a thought as to whether they were wholesome or poisonous.

And in a broader field, think how we educate ourselves by the choices we make. Our vocation, whatever that may be, commonly requires the expenditure of a good part of our time and energy. But our avocations? The strain of work relaxed how do we amuse ourselves? What thoughts suggest our amusements and are suggested by them? Have we any conception of a moral discipline in these matters? The books we read, the plays we see, the conversations we take part in—what leads us to these, and what is the moral and spiritual reaction of them? "They do me no harm," people say of immoral books and plays. What they mean by "no harm,"

is of course that they are not led by them to commit acts of sin. But they ignore the very nature of sin, that it is conceived in the heart, and that the consent to it there is the actual sin. And even supposing that we can be so in contact with that which abounds in evil suggestion and yet not ourselves sin, still by all principles of Christian morals we are unwisely and unjustifiably exposing ourselves to moral risk, are skating on very thin ice indeed. There can be no guarantee that one who exposes himself to the risk of immoral suggestion, will not, probably far more often than he realises, give consent to and harbor immoral thought.

It may be unhesitatingly asserted that our education ought to include a training in thought control and thought direction. Not only should education seek far more than it does to produce the powers of concentration, but it should seek to give the far more difficult capacity to select desirable fields of thought and to cultivate these when we are not aiming to master some subject intellectually. We should acquire early the power to turn away from that which is undesirable to that which is desirable. We should have in stock, if one may express it commercially, subjects that we have learned how to handle. For the adult the practice of meditation is of great help in this matter, and no doubt a careful Christian education should begin the practice early. The morning's meditation affords food for the day and enables us to bring wandering thoughts to heel.

It may be objected that such rigid control as I seem to be suggesting would end by destroying all power of imagination, as the imagination needs free play for its development. But is that true? Certainly we recog-

nize the enormous value of the imagination; but does its value consist chiefly, if indeed at all, in its being an undisciplined imagination? The imagination as a mere intellectual tramp seems to me to be of as little value in the moral life as its physical counterpart is in society. The imagination to be fruitful must be disciplined. There are moments in life when immediate action is required and when the imagination has to *see* the result of a given action and effectuate it. The soldier in battle, the locomotive engineer suddenly confronted with a burning bridge, the sailor sighting the wreck, the doctor at the crisis of his case, cannot stop to weigh pleasure and to weigh pain. The habitual discipline of their callings has developed in them an instinct of loyalty. They hear a voice without reply. They are led by a categorical demand which steadies their wills and to disobey which is moral recusancy. In other words, they are possessed of a trained imagination which in moments of crises enables them to visualize the situation, to grasp the meaning of the often varied details presented by the case and to bring them into a rapid synthesis and to meet the emergency. An imagination whose chief characteristic is vagrancy will be useless under the circumstances. The trained imagination, on the other hand, is an indispensable aid in the progress of knowledge, it is a traveller exploring an as yet unmapped territory. As Poincaré puts it: "Without principles that at any stage transcend precise confirmation through such experience as is then accessible, the organisation of experience is impossible." This imagination, which acts as a scout before the advancing hosts of the reason, which may well be compared to the aeroplane which soars above the unknown country to

observe and report, may be called the creative imagination, as it creates the hypothesis which the slow-plodding intellect will have in the future to test.

It is the production of such a trained and directed imagination which we desiderate when we speak of a control and direction of thought. The imagination will in some way act; the choice is between the controlled action and a merely vagrant and irresponsible action. It is the latter which is responsible for many sins of thought. It is this which saps the vitality of the will, rendering it flabby and impotent in the face of the call to action which deënergises our vision of the future, turning us to mere creations of dreams. We are deceived into mistaking romance for reality and seeing values when they do not exist. So a modern writer can say: "What you possess is not what you jangle in the pockets of your memory, but the imaginings with which you fill the spaces of the future." Day dreams are good, but only if they are filled with the energy which at least tries to transform them into realities.

Let us get a little closer to the dangers of the imagination in the matter of sins of thought. Often the imagination is founded in past experience; it delights in recalling and revelling in the memory of past sin. In thought the same sin is committed over and over again when the circumstances are brought vividly before one and the will renews its consent. One is almost ready to say that the sin that is committed in imagination is worse than was the act that is recalled; and for the reason that the recalling is attended with a lingering delight in each detail, and a gloating over the past, an extracting a savour that very likely was not present when the sin was first committed. The imagination enriches and embroiders and

extracts honey from all the minutiæ of this past. In much the same way the imagination can create what has not taken place; can set the stage in the future and cast its characters as it will. It can thus acquire a sustained and detailed pleasure for anticipated sin which will be impossible in the actual performance. Often, indeed, there is no performance anticipated; the imagination furnishes all the pleasure which is wanted. Realisation will, in fact, spoil what is essentially a work of art.

The sources of sins of thought are manifold. The memory is one of the most fertile. We have just pointed out its danger. When the memory has become accustomed to move in the past a very serious problem arises. Can we control memory? I think we can so far as to withhold consent, which is the important thing. For we have to remember in this connection that sins are in all cases acts of the will. Our consciousness is like a still pool of water over which shadows pass and play. The passing shadows in no wise disturb the serene quiet of the pool. But we are able to select from the changing content of consciousness what at any time interests us. We sit in our tower like the Lady of Shalott and watch the passing show:

> Sometimes a troop of damsels glad,
> An abbot on an ambling pad,
> Sometimes a curly shepherd-lad,
> Or long-haired page in crimson clad,

but at last the moment comes when the interest is aroused and we say, "I am half sick of shadows," and we are transformed from spectators into actors. The will seizes upon the interesting circumstance and we make ourselves over with it. But mental acts, whether spring-

ing from memory of the past or from the anticipated future are mostly interior. There is another class of thoughts which spring from the exterior world. These grow out of our intercourse with our fellows, are reactions from other lives. Most of this external suggestion cannot be helped. There is much in life that is rough and coarse that is unavoidable, nor is it altogether to be desired that it should be avoided. This is a part of the training through discipline which is the divine ordering of life. Then there are other thoughts which seem to me quite obviously to spring from the suggestions of the Powers of Darkness. They are so malignant, so obviously from outside us, that we can only think of Satan as their instigator. Do not let any fear of the "modern mind" hold you back from such attribution of certain thoughts that you feel are wholly alien to your nature, are wholly unacceptable in their suggestions. We have explicit authority for such a belief: "And during supper, the devil having now put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot to betray him." It must be maintained in such cases that the ground has been prepared, otherwise such thoughts could not find entrance; they may enter anywhere at the holiest times and under the holiest circumstances, witness the experience of all the saints; but unless the ground has been prepared they will be repelled with loathing. It is, perhaps, an evidence of the debased character of the Satanic mind, that it so often misjudges the effect of temptation; Satan imagines that what would be gratifying to him will be gratifying to the servant of God.

While we need to guard life in a general way from such external temptations, we need also to remember that they cannot be wholly avoided and are a necessary

part of our spiritual discipline. Spiritual thought is called out and perfected by the resistance to evil. There seems no other way of training. You cannot train an athlete by putting him in a library to read books on athletics, and no more can you train a spiritual athlete otherwhere than on the field of the spiritual combat. The prayer that we are taught to say, "Lead us not into temptation," can only mean "expose us not to such temptations as are beyond our strength and training," and must be balanced by that other maxim of the spiritual life, "Count it all joy when you fall into divers temptations; knowing this, that the trial of your faith worketh patience." That is true of all sorts of trials, though S. James means it only of one.

The power to resist temptation comes in great measure from the development of the virtues with which we are endowed as a consequence of our union with God. Virtues are powers, that is, they are potential energies capable of being drawn into active service through exercise. Our constant weakness lies in the negative character of our conceptions of life. We are content if we avoid. But mere avoidance produces no strength. To try to resist each temptation as it comes, especially temptations of thought, is rather a hopeless business. What is needed is such positive preparation of the spiritual nature that the presented temptation makes no appeal. Such a spiritual state is attained by the development of our spiritual powers. If they are brought to a high state of development by the constant exercise of them they themselves are our shield and protection. It is rather a hopeless and disheartening business to try to resist thoughts of uncharity when they are presented to us: but the constant exercise of the virtue of charity prepares our souls so that the

suggested thought makes no appeal. The soul which is effectively exercised in purity and peaceableness and kindness is abundantly protected from the opposite sins.

We are but elaborating the teaching of our Lord's parable of the cleansed house. There is small use in driving out the devils if the house is to be left unoccupied. The devil can still look at it and call it "My house." It is the new tenant which will effectively exclude the devil. It is the preoccupation of the spiritual nature with its positive work of growth which will render it heedless of the wandering thoughts that hang about its door and look in at its windows. The soul that can hang over its door the sign, "This is my busy day," is the soul best protected from intruders. But the idle soul simply offers itself as the prey of devils.

All this may be stated as a realisation of the presence and acts of God in our souls, realised by us in acts of co-operation with Him. God is no longer a thought in our minds, a deduction of the reason from the phenomena of existence. He is the ever-present One to Whom we may turn at any moment; Who is there always, ready with His help in all our needs; ready to bear the weight of our sorrow, to solve the perplexity of our doubt, to supplement our waning strength, to guide our wandering feet. If any were to ask, "How do we gain this conviction, out of what is this certainty born?" I should answer, one attains this certainty of God's Presence with one by *using* God. I am inclined to think that God is dim to many lives because they have never used Him. In theory they believe in a present God, but the theory leads to no practise; and a theory which leads to no practise is a useless theory. If I believe that God is with me I shall not wait for the Presence to be made known

by some manifestation of God; I shall act on my belief. If I truly have faith, I shall act as though God were there; I shall order my life with reference to Him. My prayer will gain in vividness, I shall act in confidence of His help. His Presence and cooperation will become a factor in all that I do. Thus my life will be stayed by the fact that it is not an independent life, but a life of cooperation with God.

And this life which thus relies on God's Presence and responds to it is the life which magnifies His Holy Name. This is our theory about our lives, the lives whose thoughts have been ordered and cleansed by the Presence in them of God the Holy Spirit. But we are challenged as to particulars. "How," the world asks us, "do you magnify God's Name?" And the world is quite right in demanding to see the results of our theory. We do not complain of that; but we have to confess that we experience a little difficulty in answering. What the world wants to know is: "What difference has Christianity made? You speak of the Christian life as a proof and manifestation of the ever-present working of God; in what sense is this true of it?" The world goes on: "If you mean by Christianity the possession of certain beliefs, I do not care about that. If you mean that you call yourself by certain names and receive certain sacraments, I do not care about that either: that is simply the uniform of your profession. What I want to know is what difference has come to pass in human life as a consequence of Christianity?"

Now the difficulty that one experiences in replying to that challenge is not due to the fact that Christianity has made so little difference, but to the fact that it has made so much. Christianity has not been accepted by

the world, but it has so impressed itself upon the life and thought of Western civilization that the world has in great measure accepted its ideals and learned to think in terms of Christianity to such an extent that it has come to believe that those ideals belong to it quite apart from the religion which is their true source. The success of Christianity has been so great in certain directions that it has destroyed its own evidential value; and men, finding themselves in the possession of certain ideals of character without Christian beliefs assume that the ideal grew up apart from the belief. The love of one's neighbor, to take a single instance, the conviction that we are responsible for our brother men, which underlies all modern social philosophy and is evidenced in our developing humanitarian legislation and the growing sense of society's responsibility for the welfare of all its members, is due entirely to the Christian conception of God. And just because it has impressed itself so completely upon the world Christianity has lost the credit of it.

But although our evidence has been weakened for the world by this process, it retains all its force for those who can see the facts in their true light. It is overwhelming proof of the possibility of human life reflecting the God Who has entered into communion with it. And there is this curious outcome: that humanity's success in knowing the mind of God in relation to the world has thereby raised the standard by which we are judged. The degree in which we must be godlike to justify our religion and to magnify God's Holy Name increases with our success in so doing. We come to see what the mind of God contains as more and more we translate it into human experience. We use the old words, but their perceived content becomes greater; we live the old life,

but its experience becomes deeper. As we experience God more, our thought of Him is purified and intensified. As we go deeper into the meaning of words like purity and righteousness and justice, we go deeper into God.

These thoughts may seem remote from the meaning of the collect of which the obvious significance is to prepare us for participation in the Holy Mysteries; but the connection is there. In the Holy Eucharist we are approaching God. What I have been trying to do is to define that relation in such wise that we may intelligently act upon it; so to unfold the relation that we may see all that it implies, and understand it as touching all life. It is one thing,—and I may say a very inadequate thing,—to approach God with the vague notions of His Divinity as the sole content of our minds; and quite another thing to approach Him as One with Whom we are in living and active intercourse at all times; as One we have personally experienced to be our Saviour; as One Whose Presence makes itself known in all our activity. If this is our thought of God then we may well pray that the thoughts of our hearts may be cleansed, and our souls kindled to adoration, as we enter the Sacramental Presence and in union with the Incarnate Son offer ourselves to Him anew.

THE THIRD MEDITATION

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

The *Ten Commandments* made their first appearance in the English Mass in the Second Prayer Book of Edward VI. That book forms the low-water mark in Anglican liturgical history. It was the furthest departure from Catholic tradition and the nearest approach to outright Protestantism. Each revision of the Prayer Book which has followed has been in the nature of a restoration, giving back to us more or less of the Catholic features of which the Second Book deprived us,—steps backward toward the First Book, which, in turn, was the closest approximation to the old Latin Mass. The introduction of the Ten Commandments was typical of the efforts of the more Protestant "reformers" and illustrates their whole tendency, which was in the direction of substituting an edifying *memorial* for the great Catholic liturgical *act*,—the offering of the Holy Sacrifice, the representation of the sacrifice of Calvary. Their use in the midst of the Mass is without liturgical precedent, and they are now generally omitted or rehearsed in a shortened form. It is no disparagement of their value, or of the place they occupy in the history of God's revelation of the moral law, to say that they are quite out of place as a part of the Christian's most solemn act of worship. Doubtless our congregations need to be reminded of the moral law. But there is really a touch of the ludicrous in the picture of the instructed and devout communicants, who make up the majority of those who assist at Mass, and especially of those who assist regularly and frequently, being day after day exhorted not to steal or commit murder, or reminded that there is but one God.

Let us listen to the words of the Psalm:

Make thou thy servant to delight in that which is good.

Let us picture to ourselves:

THE giving of the Law on Mount Sinai, as it is described in the Book of Exodus. The camp of Israel is spread out in the plain before the mountain. This is their first complete rest since they have escaped from Egypt. Moses has led them here that they may be taught of God. The mountain rises sheer above their camp, its summit lost in the clouds. Up there, where the storm is playing about the mountain peak, amid the flashing of the lightning and the crash of the thunder, is their great leader, in communion with God. It is not, perhaps, the first time that Moses has met God there. During the years of his exile in Midian God had revealed Himself to him. Now Moses is seeking from God the knowledge and the wisdom which shall fit him to lead God's people to the land that He has promised them. Picture the people, awe-struck at the convulsion of nature which is to them the symbol of the Presence and Majesty of God. Ever after they will think of the storm as the manifestation of the divine power. "The voice of Thy thunder was heard round about: the lightnings shone upon the ground; the earth was moved and shook withal." Up there in the heart of the storm-cloud Moses is listening for the voice of God; not a voice that will shake the mountain, but a voice that will make itself

heard in the depths of his consciousness. There will be no doubt that the thoughts that are formed there will be a reflection of the thought of God. The law that he will bring to Israel will be a law of righteousness, embodying for men so much of the divine holiness as man is now able to appreciate. Hear the voice of the thunder that announces the divine Presence. See the people fall prostrate in worship.

Consider, first,

That the essence of the revelation of God given through Moses is that God is an Holy God. The God who had wonderfully delivered His people was not like the gods of the heathen. He is a God with a moral character. It has very far-reaching implications—this revelation of the holiness of God. It sets a standard for human life. Man must be like his God. God reveals Himself in terms of human thought in order that humanity may know the kind of life that is pleasing to God. God-likeness is henceforth to be the one allowable ideal of human character. The revelation of God given at Sinai is the revelation of God as interested in human life: it is a step on toward that revelation of the supreme interest of God in man which is made in the Incarnation. The point is, not that God wants to impose a certain kind of conduct which is represented by rules; but that by the revelation of Himself He wishes to draw man to a perception of the beauty of the divine character, and to seek it in his own experience. He wishes man to see the beauty of holiness and to conceive its possibility for himself. Man is not to keep a law because he fancies that God likes a special set of rules: he is to keep this law because through the keeping of it he will be morally purified and led to the

perception of righteousness. The law is a first and lowly stage in man's advance to the perception of what holiness means; but it is a necessary stage. It is a great step to understand that God is interested that man shall be like Him, and that it is through this likeness that man shall ultimately find access to God.

Consider, second,

Have you grasped in your experience, this fact that understanding of God is through likeness to Him? That the importance of conduct is that it clears the mind and spirit for the appreciation of the character of God? God's laws are not arbitrary; they are principles, the steady action upon which leads to spiritual illumination. Have you understood that the following of the rules of Christian living is the means of producing in you the kind of character that can understand God? Our understanding of God is conditioned on our likeness to Him. The cultivation of the principles of beauty reveals to us the secret of the great artists. Through it we come to know the mind of a Titian, a Wordsworth, a Wagner. In the same way the cultivation of the qualities of justice, of mercy, of purity, make known to us the secret of God. Let us ask ourselves what stress we are laying upon the cultivation of the qualities which reveal God. Am I still in that low moral stage which thinks of the law of God as a set of arbitrary rules, more or less vexatious, which one follows because one respects the will of God?

Let us pray, then,

To see the mind of God in His law. Let us pray for insight into the law of God. Let us pray, "Open thou

mine eyes: that I may see the wondrous things of thy law."

Show the light of Thy countenance upon us, O Lord, that the going forth of Thy word may give light and understanding, to nourish the hearts of the simple; and that while our desire is set on Thy commandments, we may receive with open hearts the Spirit of Wisdom and understanding.

O God, the strength of all those who put their trust in Thee; Mercifully accept our prayers; and because, through the weakness of our mortal nature, we can do no good thing without Thee, grant us the help of Thy grace, that in keeping Thy commandments as we may please Thee both in will and deed; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

The Ten Commandments

In some respects the emphasis upon the Ten Commandments which results from their recitations in the Communion Office has been unfortunate, as I will indicate in a moment. But notwithstanding the obvious limitations of the Commandments as a statement of Christian morality, one cannot but feel that there is a certain good to be gotten from this solemn proclamation of the need of a right moral state in those who would approach God. It seems as though the advance of society in moral achievement is more slow than along other lines—so slow that one is sometimes driven to doubt whether religion is conceived by the majority of people as implying moral standards at all. No doubt every age has moral standards of some sort; but at best they are only partially those of the Gospel. Even people, otherwise very good, seem to suffer from an inexplicable moral

blindness when it is a question of their own personal action, and especially is this the case if such action is of a public or social nature. We easily permit ourselves low standards of conduct in cases where our responsibility is not direct, but only results from our membership in society. We do not feel our responsibility for social evils, which nevertheless are the worst evils with which we have to deal.

One is even tempted to say that the more important part of our moral responsibility is social. There is a responsibility upon us to protest against anything and everything which tends to lower the morals of our nation; and we do not escape that responsibility by simply holding up our hands and exclaiming, "What can I do?" We can at any rate be informed and ready for efficient protest when the opportunity presents itself. There are certain evils that cannot exist in the face of the protest of a fairly united community. The moral degradation, the poverty, the crime, the sin that are implied in the continuance of the liquor traffic nothwithstanding the prohibitory laws could easily be done away by the mere moral power of such a protest. A public with an aroused conscience could easily put an end to the moral and physical degeneracy that is implied in the continued existence of Child-labour. A Christian dealing with the problems of girl life would do much in a generation to lessen the horrors of prostitution. These and the like evils exist because the community is not moralised; and the community is not moralised because we take a private and personal, that is, a narrowly individual, view of morals; because we consider that we are moral if we refrain from immoral actions ourselves—

if we abstain from obvious violation of the law of God in our own person.

Now it seems to me that, in view of these facts, some sort of proclamation of moral law is needed; but that the insistence upon the Ten Commandments is apt to incline us to an individual view of morality and to a negative conception of the nature of moral obligation. As the Ten Commandments are the moral protest that we have at present available, let us by all means make the best of them: but let us also remember that the Ten Commandments are not an adequate expression of Christian morality. In the first place they are the undeveloped morality of a nation in a low stage of civilization: and in the second, we have the later ideals of the Gospel by which to guide and judge our lives. God's laws are given with reference to the moral state of those to whom they are proclaimed. Their intention is to form moral character, and that when formed, should progress beyond the stage that was contemplated by the law. Any set of rules ought, in the very nature of the case, to become obsolete. That they do not, as a matter of fact, indicates the moral backwardness of those whose rules they have for a long time been. The rules remain operative because of the numbers of people who fail to respond to them and to pass beyond them. Moral advance means the passage to a sphere in which the rule has ceased, not to be true, but to be applicable. If it becomes applicable there is moral lapse, and the rule is once more binding. The living by the rules of honesty should so form moral character that it should outgrow them. But if one who has ceased to feel the application of the law, "Thou shalt not steal," falls back to the lower level where that law applies it at once presses upon the life. It is only the impure that

come under the pressure of the law of purity. But if one looks to any set of rules as being a final piece of legislation, and an adequate expression of the moral life, one is likely to keep the rules and make no moral advance.

And this is especially disastrous if the rule taken for the guidance of life, is, like the Ten Commandments, negative. There is a stage in moral development in which negative rules most effectively impress the will of God. But it cannot be a permanent stage. It was the moral stage of the Israelites at the time of the giving of the Law; but it is not ours. We have passed beyond the stage of moral knowledge, and ought to have passed beyond the stage of moral development, in which a negative morality can be useful to us, to a stage in which, in fact, it is deadening. Any Christian who is trying to conduct life on a negative basis is missing the point of Christian morality altogether. And inasmuch as the constant reiteration of the Ten Commandments to Christian congregations seems to me to encourage the view that negative moral ideals are sufficient; that we are still sufficiently provided for morally by a set of rules; I believe that it would be better to sacrifice whatever is gained by the public assertion of a moral standard in the Communion Office, in order to prevent the dangerous inference that a negative attitude toward duty is sufficient for Christians.

The moral standards that are to guide the lives of Christians to-day must be gathered from the life and teaching of our Lord. What we derive from that teaching is not a set of rules, but ideals and principles which must underlie the life of the Christian, and by which that life must be guided. It is quite true that many

stitute ideals and principles for rules; and therefore it remains that the rules still have a kind of use, to which I will revert later. But for the present let us think of life as guided by principle.

We study the life and words of our Lord in order to gather direction in the conduct of our own lives. But our Lord's method of teaching was a peculiar one: He apparently did not think of His teaching as establishing rules of conduct. He seems to have assumed the existence of the ordinary moral standards of the time and not to have felt it needful to interfere with them. His effort was to lift His followers to a higher plane of living where new motives would operate in the production of new results: where human life, having perceived some new principle of action, would work it out under its own circumstances. It is only to this result of the operation of a living and formative principle in life that He seems to attach much importance. One result of such moral movement, it appears, would be to purify the existing morality which was in danger of becoming mere convention and sham. He lays down no rule of fasting, for example, but He assumes the ordinary performance of the duty, and at the same time provides of its purification and elevation to the level of a truly religious act: "When ye fast, be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance—But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thy head, and wash thy face, that thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret: and thy Father which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly."

I think that we shall find that uniformly to be the effect of our Lord's teaching—to purify conduct by removing it from its customary base in rules, to the higher level of principle. Hence that interpretation of the

Sermon on the Mount that finds in it a set of rules of a new and more strict nature, seems to me very far afield. Men still perplex themselves over the possibility of keeping such a "rule" as: "Whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also." Surely the difficulty of keeping such a rule were much less than the difficulty of understanding it as a rule at all. As a rule, the most noteworthy thing about it would be the narrowness of its application to the facts of life. It is a rule, I venture to think, that most of us have little chance of applying later than our school days. But as a concrete instance of a principle stated in the extreme case it becomes an invaluable guide to conduct. Our Lord's method is not to lay down a principle and leave us to deduce instances of its application; He instances an extreme case under the principle and leaves us to deduce the principle from that. Studied from that point of view the Sermon on the Mount becomes, not a collection of bizarre rules, but a collection of illustrations of principles capable of fruitful application in every life.

This method of principle becomes clearer when we study it in the Beatitudes. It there appears as the commendation of certain states of soul. Primarily, I should say, they are states of aspiration. The Christian is conceived as longing for the ideal as the means of his self-expression. Certain qualities are blessed because they are the expression of a certain type of character. The poor in spirit and the pure, the meek and the peaceful, are of a certain spiritual quality—the quality indicative of a life in harmony with God.

And that, perhaps, indicates the inner meaning of our Lord's teaching. He Himself is the revelation of God. Glimpses of the mind and character of God had come to

man, both through the study of the natural world, and through preceeding revelation. But in Jesus God stands revealed so far as revelation of God to humanity is essential. God's character and His attitude toward humanity are translated for us in the life of Jesus; and they are translated for us in order that we may form ourselves upon that model. The value of the principles that He enunciates through His teaching is that the application of them to human life will transform that life and make it like the life of Jesus. We cannot attain to that likeness by following rules of conduct, but only by assimilating to our life the principles of His life.

There is something pathetic in the negative method, by which one attempts to acquire qualities by the way of abstention: to acquire, for example, the quality of peaceableness by abstention from acts of violence. There is something helplessly inadequate in the method by which one attempts to acquire a quality by the exercise of particular instances of it. That is the quite hopeless method of a certain type of spiritual book which bids us practise acts of humility as the means of becoming humble. Unless the act is the spontaneous flowering of the quality, one fails to see how it is humility at all.

I trust that I have said enough to indicate that Christian morality is quite a different thing from the keeping of the Ten Commandments. Its key-note is found in that saying of S. Paul: "Let this mind be in you which is also in Christ Jesus. The mind of Christ, which is the mind of God; that is our aim." This mind becomes ours, potentially, by virtue of our indwelling in Christ. As we are taken up into Him and share His life, the power to reflect that life in our own living becomes ours.

It becomes ours actually as the devout study of the life of our Lord enables us to gain from Him understanding of His method in dealing with life. Abstract principles and ideals are understood as we see them embodied in His experience. If I have given myself to Him and made my will one with His will the effect will be that my life will become like His life. Under my own different circumstances I shall reflect to the world the life of my Master.

This emphasises, does it not, the need of devout study of the life of Jesus? Would that our Gospels might become the indispensable companions of our day. What we need is not the cursory familiarity with the events of our Lord's life which come of frequent reading; but we need that He shall speak to us through His life in words that are spiritually understood. We need to get rid of the sense of distance, and let Him speak to us as He spoke to His disciples. What no doubt influenced them more than any words that He spoke was the influence of His living presence. That living presence is to-day behind the written word; it is the presence of one with whom we are united. Let Jesus speak to you out of the pages of His life; as you brood over that life the word will come speaking in your souls in tones that the soul will understand; and there will be formed in you the mind of Jesus, and you will understand the problems of your life in the light of His life.

"But," you will say, "true as that is and valuable as I have found it in my experience to interpret life in the light of the life of Jesus: illuminating as the principles drawn from His life and words undoubtedly are, it still seems that there are problems of conduct that have to be decided by the current rules of morality. It still re-

mains that most lives find themselves struggling on the level of that moral action where the Ten Commandments, or at least some of them, apply. Granted my good intentions and even my earnest efforts, I still do not wholly escape to that high level of the Christ-life. Do you mean that ordinary conduct, if it be not solved in the light of Christ's life, is then to resort to the standard of the Commandments? In short, what is the relation between customary morality, with its rules of conduct, and Christian morality which is the life of Christ in us?"

This is a legitimate and an important question. And we ought to get clear to ourselves at the outset that human morality is a matter of natural evolution. There has never been a revealed code of morals; but rules of conduct have grown up in the course of the evolution of the race and reflect the experience of the race. Things to be done or avoided, customs to be kept, actions to be observed, are the outcome of humanity's experience of what is on the whole best for it. The Ten Commandments were not the enactment of a new set of moral rules; they embody the old customary morality of the Semitic peoples. Men did not first learn, in the time of Moses, that it is wrong to lie and steal and kill. What the Mosaic legislation did was to put upon certain moral principles of the people of Israel the authoritative stamp of the divine approval. Henceforth Israel was not to regard its moral laws as merely customary, but as also representative of the divine will. God had revealed Himself to them as an holy God and chosen them to be an holy people; and for the time being, and relatively to their moral state, their holiness was best conceived as apartness from evil.

But still it underlay the conception of life that was proposed to Israel in the Mosaic revelation that essentially holiness is likeness to God. The ideal was "be ye holy, for I am holy." It was the business of religion to work out this conception to its full expression in the formation of a life that has godlikeness; that is holy, not by separation from evil, but by participation in God. That is, religious action upon morality is not chiefly to change custom, but to give custom a new sanction and to transform its meaning. Morality, under the action of religion, ceases to be mere inherited custom and becomes an expression of the will of God. The meaning of observance is that now through it character is purified and strengthened and assimilated to the character of God: but it is this by virtue of its intended obedience to the will of God through men's purpose to live as the children of God. The negative character of the morality of Israel, and of much of our common morality which is derived from it, has, therefore, a practical side. Its abstinence must be understood as implying a positive view of God. Because God is holy His nature is alien from all evil. Or, to put it the other way, that which is alien from the mind of God we conceive as evil, and therefore abstain from it as destructive of godlikeness in us.

There is still therefore a need of rules. Christianity did not dispense with them: it gave them rather an added emphasis because it made known more clearly the character of God. Aloofness from all that is contrary to the will of God is fundamental to the Christian conception of character. We still need to examine ourselves as to our violations of God's law. But in the unfolding of the character of God through the human life of our

Lord new elements of holiness have come into evidence, or old elements have received new emphasis. Godlikeness has now become a thoroughly positive conception: we understand it as the character that is formed by the assimilation of the principles that underly our Lord's life. The stress of our self-examination ought to fall on our success or failure in this latter work.

The suggestion of the Ten Commandments in the Communion Office is that of the need of some standard by which to examine our lives with a view of determining our state before God. Their use to earnest Christians lies in this suggestiveness. Evidently they do not themselves supply this required standard. The best that can be said of them is that they do embody the germ-principles of universal morality: they are moral hints that are capable of indefinite expansion. The content of the commandment, "I am the Lord thy God; thou shalt have no other Gods but me," expands as our knowledge of God expands, until it comes to include the evangelical conception of God. And so of the others: an adequate expansion of them will cover the moral field, positive and negative. And they are useful to us only as expanded; our examination by them can only be based upon them not limited to them. They can be used as centers about which to group the knowledge of Christian obligation derived from the life and teaching of our Lord. This work is that attempted, and accomplished with more or less adequacy, in the current manuals for self-examination before confession and Communion.

Such manuals have their use; but I must say that it seems to me a use chiefly for children and other mechanically-minded persons, and for new beginners in the diffi-

cult art of self-knowledge. Earnest Christians ought to dispense with them as anything more than rough guides. What we need is expertness in the comparison of our lives with their ideals, and in the observance of how far our lives are embodying the principles by which we claim to live. There is but one way to do this; and that is by the constant reference of our lives to our Lord's life. He is the one example and standard, and we must not allow our eye to wander from Him. The ever-present danger of the Christian is the danger of the low standard; of contentedly resting in the conventional morality of our time. That is predominately an exterior morality for the social purposes of life. It is the embodiment of human experience as to what is most serviceable in the present conditions of society. It is not at all adequate for purposes of spiritual advance. Acquiescence in it means spiritual stagnation.

And it seems to me that in our approach to our Lord in our Communions we need a broader outlook on our lives than is implied in the self-examination in regard to sin which is the preliminary to confession. The question, Are we ready to receive the Bread of God, is not adequately answered by the reply, I am not in a state of moral sin. My approach to my Lord ought to imply eager desire and earnest aspiration. It implies, as I pointed out in the first of these meditations, the expectance of results. It implies, therefore, the kind of self-examination which shall reveal my progress in Christ-likeness; the judgment of my life in the light of its opportunities and possibilities of achievement. I need to determine, not only what I have done or left undone, which is the limit of ordinary self-examination; but what I presently am. I can only know that as I compare my-

self with my ideals of the Christian life, as I seek knowledge of that life in the life of my Redeemer.

This, no doubt, seems a tremendously difficult thing. It is much easier to determine whether I have been needlessly absent from worship, or have told a lie, than to determine my deficiency in the qualities of mercy and charity. It is also much easier to repent of the former than to correct the latter. But we shall agree, when it is put in this concrete way, that to correct the qualities is fully as important as to repent of the sins. The sins need not represent anything permanent in my character; the deficiency in the qualities certainly does. "But how," you will ask me, "am I to deal with the deficiency?" That question brings us face to face with the central problem of Christian living.

Let me say once more—though I have said it so many times—that we shall succeed in proportion as we yield ourselves to the influence of our Lord. Let me also say again that this is so because that life is not a record of the past but an experience of Jesus that is now possible for us. Our Lord's life is energetic; power still goes out from Him. His mercy and charity and purity are communicable, and are communicated to those who are in union with Him. We have not to build up those qualities in ourselves by a laborious process, by a series of difficult acts. We have only to desire them and to yield ourselves to His action. Learn what charity is in our Lord. Watch it in His life. Study it in its various manifestations. See how He deals with human souls; His kindliness with the Paralytic; His sympathy with the Magdalen; His patience with the woman of Samaria; His mercy with the woman taken in adultery. Let the influence of this action of our Lord become plain to

you. Learn to understand it as an expression of God's attitude toward us, as a revelation of the character of God, and it cannot fail that you will admire it and long for it. You will long to be like Him in His attitude toward others. And the longing will be answered; you will find it easier to deal with others; to sympathise, to be patient, to show mercy, to make allowances. You will find that it is no longer hard to do these things; that there has come to you, not so much the power of doing them, as a joy in them that makes them natural and easy for you.

And as it is with this quality, so with others. Appreciation will lead to desire, and desire to attainment. Truth and purity and peacefulness will be born. And with them will be born a new joy in living. I find myself the center of a new influence; life becomes the experience of a new force. I wake to the truth of S. Paul's saying, "It is not I that live, but Christ that liveth in me." That is what Christian living ultimately means —a life possessed by Christ, and used by Him as the means of His self-expression to the world. That is what every Christian ought to be—an expression of Christ's life, a living evidence of the new power that cometh from Him. It is remote, is it not, from our hard labour of keeping rules? From our present anxiety about commandments? From our labour under the yoke of the Law? Yes; it is the freedom of the Christian, the freedom that he has won by the surrender of his life that he may receive it again, his freedom joyfully to serve, and serving to gain the perfection of his own life in union with the life of Christ Whose he is.

THE FOURTH MEDITATION

THE SUMMARY OF THE LAW

Our Lord's *Summary of the Law* was introduced into our Mass from the Prayer Book of Scotland. Its source is, of course, Matt. xxii, 37–40.

What we know as a low Mass is a Western mediæval development, unknown to this day in the Eastern church. Until the middle ages High Mass, that is, Mass celebrated with the assistant ministers and music and incense, was the norm, as it still is in the East. Our Low Mass is a curtailed substitute, and many of its details are puzzling unless one remembers this. The Introit, which begins the Mass proper and is its first variable feature, is simply the processional psalm sung by the choir while the celebrant and his assistants are entering, thus relieving the gloomy effect produced by a company marching silence. Such is its origin. But it soon won its position in the liturgy and when the Low Mass without choir was evolved the Introit came to be said by the celebrant, as it now is even at High Mass though sung by the choir. It consists of an antiphon or introductory verse, the verse of a psalm, the *Gloria Patri* (except on such mournful occasions as requiems and in the masses of Passiontide) and then the antiphon repeated. The antiphon is very often taken from the same psalm as the verse which follows, but it is not invariably from Holy Scripture. The pertinence of the matter selected for the Introit, particularly to be noted in the feast day and votive masses, is evidence of the completeness with which our forefathers knew their Bible. Just as the psalms and canticles (for instance *Miserere, Magnificat,* and so forth) came to be referred to by their initial words, so each mass came to be known by the first word of its Introit, which explains such terms as Requiem Mass and Lætare Sunday. Introits were retained in the First Prayer Book and their reintroduction is advocated in some of the present revision projects. Many of them are given in the "English Hymnal." No altar book which omits them is complete.

Let us listen to the words of the Gospel:

And he entered into one of the ships, which was Simon's, and prayed him that he would thrust out a little from the land. And he sat down, and taught the people of the ship.

Let us picture to ourselves:

THIS scene by the shore of the lake of Gennesaret. It was like many scenes in our Lord's life. He was always teaching the people wheresoever He could gather them. There is a great crowd here this morning, eagerly pressing to get near the wonderful Teacher. They do not want to lose any word that He speaks. But the pressure of the crowd defeats its own end; so great is the confusion that it is impossible for our Lord to teach them at all. So He gets into Simon's boat and pushes off a little from the land. The scene easily comes to us in all its essential elements. There is the blue surface of the lake broken by silver wavelets that flash ceaselessly in the intense sunlight. There are the fishing-boats along the shore; the fishermen, interrupted in their work, are gone out of them and are mingled among the crowd. The hills slope back from the shore where the many coloured Oriental crowd presses eagerly to the edge of the water. And in Simon's boat Jesus himself is standing, and the people gradually hush themselves into silence as He begins to speak. One pictures to oneself, above all, Simon, in whose life this

day is to be critical. How intently he listens; with what growing conviction of the truth of the words spoken; with what overpowering sense of the attractiveness of the man who is teaching out of his boat. When the day ends he will have forsaken all to follow him. See the faces of the crowd as they listen. On this man's face there is a deepening shadow which is the reflection of his sinfulness now becoming clear to him. On that man's there is the radiance of a new hope.

Consider, first,

That He who is speaking thus from Simon's boat is no ordinary teacher. He is not a philosopher with a new theory of the world. He is not a Scribe explaining the Law. He is not, what the Hebrew people might very well expect, a new prophet, come after the silence of centuries, to resume the old method of God's guidance of Israel, a prophet with a burning message from God whose words should once more announce their authority: "Thus saith Jehovah of Hosts." He that teaches out of Simon's boat is God Himself. Let us permit that fact to sink into our minds for a moment. Jesus is God. His words are the words of God. His teaching is not human teaching about God; it is God's revelation of Himself. Our first thought—and unfortunately it is often the last thought—is to recoil from the wonder of it—God in a man's boat! But rather would not the wonder be if it were not so? What kind of a God is it in whom we believe? Where should we expect Him to reveal Himself if not in the intimacies of human life? "Therefore will the Lord wait that He may be gracious unto you, and therefore will He be exalted, that He may have mercy

upon you—thou shalt weep no more; He will be very gracious unto thee at the voice of thy cry; when He shall hear it He will answer thee." Yes; no doubt, one believes that, but it does not touch one very much. "Where two or three are gathered together in my name there am I in the midst of them." One understands that; that is what one would expect of God. The more one lets one's thoughts rest on Jesus the more inevitable He is, if there be a God at all. The God who does not teach in men's boats and go to their marriage feasts and sit at their tables and stand beside the graves of their dead becomes more and more inconceivable to one. One feels that it is through the Incarnation that one reaches God: that without that God would always be in danger of becoming a name to one. The Old Testament teaching about God is believable because it looks forward to and issues in his Incarnation.

Consider, second,

Whether you have achieved such intimacy with God that you find His presence in your life natural. Do you expect to have your life so controlled by the teaching of Jesus that His presence is manifest there? "The words that I speak unto you they are spirit and they are life." The words of Jesus interpret us to ourselves. We are so apt to judge our lives by the standards of other teachers or by our own interpretation of life. But we have understood the meaning of life only when we have it explained to us by Jesus. Let us ask ourselves whether we are very ready to have our lives so explained to us? When we adopt a certain line of conduct, when we determine to perform this or that act, what is it that is

determining us? One can think of a good many things that might determine one: one's desire for success or comfort or happiness. But that one's conduct is in accord with the teaching of Jesus? Look back on the last month; you have had some things to decide during that time. What has guided your choice? It is through choosing that we come to know. Our Lord's words fall on the ears as idle sounds when there is not the constant exercise of a choice that makes them our own. We must listen with the purpose of obeying: to have heard day after day the truth with neither purpose nor attempt of obedience is to harden the heart so that we cannot understand. The understanding is reached through the heart. Have you learned to love the words of Jesus so that you have come to read them with a sense of their having been spoken to you: lingering upon them as words of personal guidance, going back to them again and again and at each recurrence finding new meanings in the inexhaustible fulness of the words of God? Has the Gospel become thus personal to you? Have you learned through it to be intimate with your God?

Let us pray,

That our Lord will make Himself personally known to us through His words so that we may find them words spoken to us. Pray to find in His words the revelation of your own life.

O Almighty God, whom truly to know is everlasting life; Grant us perfectly to know Thy Son Jesus Christ to be the way, the truth, and the life; that, following the steps of Thy holy Apostles, we may steadfastly walk in the way that leadeth to eternal life; through the same Thy Son Jesus Christ our Lord.

The Summary of the Law

No doubt, the Summary of the Law, following as it does the Ten Commandments, is intended to emphasise the fact that the religion of the Old and New Testaments is one. This is, indeed, a fact worth emphasising. There is a feeling abroad that we may safely disregard the Old Testament as a distinctly inferior book—a book having, it may be, a certain historical or archæological value, but as a book of spiritual teaching superseded by the New Testament. It is perhaps true that all the teaching that we actually need for the guidance of our lives can be gathered from the pages of the New Testament; but it is not therefore true that the Old Testament is unimportant, and that we lose nothing by ignoring it. We lose for one thing, and it is the only thing that I am concerned with now, the keen sense of the divine purpose running through the history of the race, and issuing in the Revelation made in the Gospel. That Revelation was the fulfilment of what had gone before it; it was the further unfolding of the truths contained in the pages of the prophets and Psalmists. There was a new element in the teaching of Jesus as there must always be in the teaching which is an advance on that which has gone before. But the new element harmonised perfectly with the old; it was an advance on the same line that the religion of Israel had been following; it was a new departure, not a new beginning; it consisted much more in showing what was implied in the religion of the Old Testament, than in the setting forth of truths hitherto unknown.

Indeed, after one believes in God, all else in religion must be the unfolding of this belief and the apprecia-

tion of it in detail. Religions are false in so far as they present wrong notions about God, and wrong deductions from true notions. The element of falsity in the Jewish religion contemporaneous with our Lord was due to wrong inferences about God. What the Psalmist had said of the wicked, was true of many of our Lord's contemporaries,—they thought that God was even such a one as themselves, and they made the appropriate deductions in the teaching of the Scribes and Pharisees. The revelation that our Lord made was intended to recall men first of all to a true thought about God. In so doing there was no need to contradict or set aside the Old Testament; there was need to supplement and clarify its statements. What men need to know, and what at all times they have sought to know, is God, and the mind of God toward them. And this is the message of Jesus: He reveals God and the need of God. You search the Gospels in vain for any trace of a disagreement between the teaching Jesus and the mind of the Father as that mind had been expressed in the Old Testament. We feel them to be one; and we feel them to be one because Jesus Himself felt Himself to be one with the Father. He has no shadow of hesitation in explaining the mind of the Father because in so doing He is explaining his own mind. He and the Father are one. Jesus is God, and knows himself to be God.

That is the fact that we have to reckon with in any attempt to appreciate the teaching of Jesus—his consciousness that He is God, His presentation of His teaching as having the authority of God. I am unable to understand how anyone can read the Gospels and fail to gain the conviction that Jesus is sure of His own

divinity. His teaching is, no doubt, constantly about the Father; but He feels Himself so perfectly one with the Father that His mind is the Father's mind, and His word the Father's word. No one regarding himself as a merely human teacher bearing a message from God, could so absolutely indentify himself with God. He is not an echo: His is an original voice. He and the Father are one, and all things that the Father has are His.

This is quite a different note from any that you find in the prophets. The prophets are always certain of their representative character. They draw attention away from themselves to their message. They sink themselves that they may exalt God. Jesus does not do that. He asserts truth as His. He does not hesitate to sweep aside a mass of traditional teaching with an "I say unto you." There are those to-day who profess to admire our Lord as a great—as the greatest of spiritual teachers; who would have us accept His teaching and follow Him on the ground that He was a man of supreme spiritual insight, because He, more than any other of the sons of men, has sympathetic understanding of the mind of God, and has therefore better than any other interpreted God to us. But it is not possible for me to accept our Lord as a man of sympathetic insight into the mind of God, if I must first of all admit that He was mistaken about Himself in His plain assertions of His own divinity. Neither can I consent to leave the question of His Personality untouched, and accept His teaching without asking for any definition of Him. His teaching is all too revolutionary for that. Quite plainly, there are parts of it that I should hesitate to accept, if

they were from the lips of man. I accept them because I am able to accept Him as all that He claims to be—God Incarnate, God revealing Himself to man.

The teaching of Jesus does not seem to me what it is ordinarily assumed to be, primarily a teaching of human duty, of human goodness. These things seem to me altogether secondary in His teaching. His teaching is primarily about Himself. If He be the way, the truth and the life, and no man cometh to the Father but by Him, it is idle to say that the important thing about the Gospels is their moral fervor or their revelation of human brotherhood. The important thing about the Gospels is the self-assertion of Jesus, and until we have reckoned with that we cannot accept His teaching at all. I can have no confidence in the teaching of a man who masqueraded in the character of a God: I am ready to accept any word that falls from the lips of God revealing Himself in human form.

It is, then, because I believe with the Christian Church in all times that Jesus is God that I look to His revelation as the source of truth and guidance. My life is to be shaped in accordance with the teaching of the Gospel.

The Gospel is to me the revelation of the mind of God because it is the revelation of the mind of Jesus, Who is God. That is its authority. I find in it difficult things and hard sayings that I should fret under and balk at if they had any other authority back of them. The Christian religion is not an easy religion to live by: the proof of that is that we are so prone to substitute something else for it. The world has always been full of substitutes for Christianity, the reason for the existence of which you will find, if you examine them, is that they are either morally or intellectually easier than Christian-

ity. That is the explanation of heresy—that men have found Christianity too difficult. We are all the time being offered new systems, religions of the future and the like, which, we are told, will in time supersede the old Christianity of tradition. Possibly they will: I do not know the answer to our Lord's question whether at His coming He will find the faith upon the earth. But whether they succeed or fail they are interesting to me chiefly as illustrations of the constant tendency of men to seek a comfortable religion—a religion that shall put as little strain upon them as possible. I myself do not see how religion can be other than difficult; how that which deals, by one side of it, with a revelation from God of Himself and His relations with men can fail to raise questions which present insuperable difficulties to the human intellect; and by the other side of it, attempts to discipline the human passions, can do otherwise than arouse those very passions to the extremity of opposition. A religion involving neither moral nor intellectual difficulties could only be a collection of platitudes such as modern substitutes for Christianity tend to become.

One of the characteristics of our Lord's teaching is the way in which it confines itself to moral and spiritual interests. Human speculation tries, naturally enough, to answer all questions. But religion is not a philosophy, and leaves its proper province when it attempts to become one. Christianity is often absurdly reproached with this—that it is not a philosophy or a science, and therefore does not attempt to answer all questions that may be asked of it. Its defenders, as absurdly, often try to prove that it is. Religion is called upon to answer questions which concern it not at all, or only remotely, and then men reject it because it cannot satisfy their curiosity.

I am unable to see why religion should be expected to solve scientific and philosophical difficulties about the nature of God and the structure of the universe. It is no objection to religion that it does not concern itself with such things, or to its claim to be a revelation that it does not contain answers to them. Our Lord markedly leaves all such questions outside His teaching. The province of religion, we gather from His teaching, is to bring to perfection the union that there is between ourselves and Him by removing all things in us that can check and hinder that union, and by developing all things that can minister to it.

It is well that we should define the province of religion in our own lives. It is "what our Lord Jesus Christ saith"; that is, it is life guided by Him to the enjoyment of a perfect communion with God. I do not of course mean that any part of life is unconcerned with God; but only that certain things are not necessary to the achievement of this communion. It is not necessary to it that we should have all problems solved and all questions answered; it is not necessary that we should have all difficulties removed and all ways made plain and easy for us. Indeed, it is the teaching of our Lord that problems and difficulties will remain unto the end. They remained in His human life; to the end it seemed possible that the "cup" might "pass from" Him; in the end there was a hiding from Him of the divine power—a hiding of the Presence of the Father so that He could say, "Why hast thou forsaken me?" There were mysteries that were hid from His human mind—the mystery of the day and the hour that He knew not. We shall expect to find the same experience in ourselves. There will be mysteries in God's providential dealing with us that will perplex and

try us; there will be pains that we are called upon to suffer that will seem to us meaningless, and removable if God would hear us; there will be trails to our faith and prayers that seem answerless, and cries that go out into the silence and that no one heeds. These are difficulties that are hard to bear; but to one who loves God the hardest of all to bear is the silence of God. Yet if we have a true faith in Him these things shall not shake us; they will only draw us closer to Him in the conviction that these things themselves are the signs of His presence, the evidence that He has not forgotten us, the witness that even now He is busy with our lives.

There can be no doubt that there was something in our Lord's teaching that fascinated those that heard Him. All those crowds were not impelled by curiosity merely; and even if curiosity was a large element in their action, curiosity is only stirred by that which is new. There was something original in His teaching that brought the conviction that "never man spake as this man." His influence, we gather, was less the influence of His word than of His Person. The words that He spake were "gracious words," that is, they came with an added note of persuasiveness. There was a winning gentleness in His dealings with men; even when He rebuked, there would be no resentment, save in hearts hardened in pride and self-will. This is what we should expect when we remember that the Person who is speaking is Incarnate God,—that He is revealing to us the Father. The gentleness of God—that is what men needed to learn, though the prophets had read the truth centuries before; the gentleness of God, not the good nature of God, which is the modern reading of it. Good nature indifferently declines to consider the painful case, putting it aside as of

no importance. Gentleness recognises the importance and deals with the case, but in such wise that we are thankful for the pain that results. Good nature says of a sin, "It does not matter much, after all: let it go." Gentleness says that it matters so much that it cannot be let go; and by making one feel the awfulness of the sin, makes one accept with joy the means of purification. Good nature tells us that we need no remedy and leaves us to die; gentleness insists on applying a remedy, and saves us. No one ever spoke more sternly of sin than our blessed Lord Himself; but no one was ever more winning and gentle with sinners.

This feature of our Lord's teaching may, perhaps, be stated more broadly by saying that our Lord was always optimistic in His teaching. I think that this was one chief source of His attractiveness to the crowds that flocked to hear Him. They were men, for the most part, who had little to expect from life. They included a large element from whom society had ceased to hope anything. They were those whom society reckoned "hardened" and "irreclaimable" and had done its best to make such. There were others—the greater number—to whom attached no social stigma, but who were conscious within themselves of their utter spiritual failure, and were unable to perceive any ground for further hope for themselves. The majority, at any time, are indifferent to religion; but if they could be stirred to think of their state at all, they would recognise that they were baffled, beaten, discouraged. Whatever impulses toward good they at any time felt were transitory, and while they lasted, met with neither encouragement, guidance nor cooperation.

To all such our Lord's teaching could not have been

other than fascinating. Despair as they might of themselves, He did not despair of them. When they looked up at Him, startled at hearing a personal note in His teaching, surprised to find their case considered and understood, their eyes met eyes full of comprehension and kindliness and hope. Despair as they might of themselves, here was One who did not despair of them, Who could think of a future in which they should have a place.

I fancy that more lives than one expects are in need of encouragement and sympathy—need to be taught to hope better things of themselves. People settle down in an unsatisfactory life without any illusions as to its unsatisfactoriness, with a pessimistic acquiescence in what they are as the inevitable. "O, I know: but it is useless for me to try. I am a failure, I know; but I cannot help it." They find what comfort they can in denials of the doctrine of future punishment—denials they themselves feel are hollow. There is a good deal of danger in dwelling on the fact of sin without dwelling on the fact of forgiveness. If Christianity has accentuated the meaning and the disaster of sin, it has also opened wide the door of repentance and made plain the way of escape. And Christianity is not at all committed to the pessimism of the doctrine of heredity, because, while fully recognising it in its doctrine of Original Sin, it shows how it can be counteracted by its doctrine of regeneration and grace. These things we ought to bear in mind in dealing with others and with ourselves. Whatever may be the state of any soul—I care not how bad—there is no reason for acquiescing in it as a necessary state. I can be changed—that is the magnificent optimism of the Gospel. Think of your possibilities, rather than of your

failures. There is nothing in the way of spiritual conquest that is impossible for you; there is nothing in the way of spiritual development that you may not attain. Our Lord came, precisely, to call sinners; and sinners does not mean fairly good people who at times fall slightly short of their ideal, but it includes all who have sinned, I care not with what extremity and malignity of sin. An adequate response to the Gospel includes an optimistic view of ourselves. It is not pious, as some seem to think, to be constantly regarding ourselves as "miserable sinners." It is the business of a Christian to be rid of sin and to go on to perfection; and it is of the essence of the teaching of Jesus that this is possible for all. It is a strange and distorted teaching that insists on sin as inevitable, and ignores the virtue of our Lord's Blood, and the renewing action of God the Holy Ghost.

This optimism of our Lord in regard to human nature finds itself criticised from another quarter. It is too idealistic, we are told. His religion might be taken seriously by angels, but hardly by men. And the consequence of His impractical teaching is that Christendom is silently agreed to ignore it and explain it away. Men have never lived by the Sermon on the Mount, and never can. The Christianity of Christendom has no resemblance to the Christianity of Christ.

We may as well admit the large measure of failure that Christendom has shown at all times when judged by the standard of Christ's teaching. But that does not prove that the Christian religion as taught by Christ is impracticable, but only that we have not practised it. And over against the failure we must place the success. No one but an intensely prejudiced person can deny that

Christianity has had, and to-day is having, a tremendous influence both in ameliorating social conditions and in reforming individual lives. No one who has studied history can doubt of the tremendous effect of Christianity for good; no one who has tried to apply its principles to his own living doubts of their power or attributes the results he has obtained to anything else than the influence of Jesus. I think, too, that anyone who is able to take a broad view of history will agree that the influence of Christianity is a growing one, and is to-day, on the whole, stronger than ever before. That being so, the admission that Christendom does not, and never has reflected completely the mind of Christ, is less disastrous. In the teaching of the Gospel is embodied in completeness God's ideal for humanity. It was placed before the eyes of a humanity that was just able to perceive its beauty and its truth. It recognised that that ideal was not its in any adequate sense. And each succeeding generation of Christians has recognised the same thing. But Christendom has never lost its sense of the value of the ideal, has never ceased to hunger and thirst after righteousness. It has not left it to unbelievers to point out its failures; it has been its own severest critic. And the blush of the Christian is a thing of infinitely greater significance than the jeer of the unbeliever, for it represents an adequate self-judgment and an unshattered determination to persevere. The Christian, feeling his own failure as no one else does, feels also his own possibilities, and presses on toward the ideal end. Because the ideal is high it takes long to reach it, but we have faith to believe that both the Christian Church and the Christian individual will at length fulfil our Lord's command: "Be ye therefore perfect, as your Father in heaven is perfect."

THE FIFTH MEDITATION

THE KYRIE ELEISON

Since the Introit is the entrance procession, and the celebrant's prayers at the foot of the altar are Preparation, the *Kyrie Eleison* is the first prayer in the Mass. The petition "Lord have mercy" antedates the Christian era, being found repeatedly in the Old Testament, where its use is already quasi liturgical. Nevertheless it is not one of the oldest features in the Mass. It was first used in the East, probably in the fourth century, and was borrowed and introduced into the Roman Mass about the year 500. The Roman Mass was originally in Greek. The Roman Christians for at least the first two centuries spoke Greek, and it would appear that Latin was first used by the church in Africa, and not at Rome. Latin did not replace Greek in the Roman church until the third or fourth century. A trace of the early days remains in the Latin missal, in the Greek words of the *Trisagion* on Good Friday. The Kyrie is not such a fragment, but was borrowed from the East after the Roman church used Latin. It is believed to be a part of a litany, the rest of which has vanished. The Gloria in Excelsis, as a hymn of praise concluding a litany, followed, in the Latin Mass, immediately after the Kyrie; and this, its proper and traditional place, was retained in our First Prayer Book.

The notion of a special liturgical language is a late development. The early Roman Christians, who were Greek-speaking, had their Mass in Greek. When Latin came to predominate the liturgy was translated into Latin. There are weighty arguments both for and against a vernacular liturgy and it is interesting to know that our own greatest translator of hymns, Dr. Neale, was opposed to it. But, from the point of view of the illiterate, it can hardly be claimed that the sonorous but archaic phraseology of the Prayer Book constitutes a vernacular liturgy.

Let us listen to the words of Holy Scripture:

Lest there be any—profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright.

Try to picture:

ESAU pleading with his father for a blessing. Esau had just come in from the chase and was bringing to his father the savory meat that the old man desired. But Jacob had forestalled him and received the blessing. It is a wonderfully vivid scene that the book of Genesis brings before us. The bewilderment of the blind old man, recognising with difficulty the deceit that has been practised by his younger son; the growing grief and indignation of Esau at the fraud that has been practised upon him; and in the background we seem to see Jacob and his mother listening and watching, and planning to take what measures may be needful for their safety. As we watch the scene and see the understanding of what has been done grow upon Esau, our sympathies go out to him, in his exceeding bitter cry, "Bless me, even me also, O my father." It often happens that our sense of the value of a possession increases after we have lost it; and one feels that a good deal of the poignancy of Esau's grief is due to the sense that he has been defrauded rather than to any deep sense of the value of the Blessing which he has lost. But now he is himself convinced that the father's Blessing is more valuable than all else; he no doubt imagines that always he has

valued it; that at least he must have some Blessing. "Hast thou but one Blessing, my father? Bless me, even me also, O my father." Listen to that grief-stricken cry that seems to come out of Esau's very heart.

Consider, first,

That when we get away from the dramatic effect of the scene, and consider calmly Esau's character we begin to doubt, not of the immediate sincerity of Esau's emotion, but of its inner truthfulness. The character of Esau as it is revealed by the story as a whole, and as the final fashioner of the story no doubt intended us to understand it, is one of complete superficiality, capable of surface bursts of emotion, but incapable of intense and abiding purpose. It is the character of a selfish man who feels intensely any wound to self-esteem, any invasion of his personal rights, but whose emotion passes and his sense of injury is lost when some new object of desire comes to fill the field of his consciousness. Esau has the superficial quality of charm which makes a man attractive to those whose interests, like his own, lie on the surface of things; but he is repellent to those to whom depth of purpose, sincerity, and an unselfish valuation of life are important things. Those who judge hastily are perplexed at the repeated condemnation of Esau in the Scriptures, and the preference manifested for Jacob whose character is superficially contemptible. But the reason of the preference is that Jacob was able through his sense of the value of the things that pertain to God to overcome and purify the glaring imperfections of his character, while Esau was never other than the superficial and trifling man of the world. His later meeting with Jacob, showing no trace of resentment for

the past, shows too that he had found in his life all that he needed for his own satisfaction, and that he had not missed all that the Birthright and the Blessing stood for. He reveals himself as essentially a "profane person."

Consider, second,

How typical this character is. It is the man who moves on the surface of life, who lives in the immediate present, unheedful of the depths that underlie existence and of the future that every soul must face. He is essentially a "profane person" to whom the "morsel of meat" that a life set on purely wordly aims seeks in the present gratification of desire is the willingly accepted equivalent for the bartered birthright. To such men the appeal of religion is merely an annoyance, an attempted interference with what they describe as their liberty, an arbitrary limitation sought to be imposed upon their freedom to enjoy life in their own way. Their life moves in the narrow circle of self-pleasing, and because they often please themselves in delicate and luxurious ways, avoiding the difficult, and declining the burdensome, creating about them an atmosphere full of the melody and perfume of a graceful existence, they fascinate the unthinking and, always doing good unto themselves, men speak well of them. In such the sense of sin and the need of repentance are wanting. What sometimes appears repentance is but the reaction of disappointed desire—morose resentment following upon failure to attain. They are so accustomed to have their way in the world, and to find the oyster of life open readily to the sword of their imperious desire, that they look on a thwarted wish as an act of injustice. But they have no sense of unworthiness, no sense of guilt, because they

have no spiritual ideal. The loss of the Birthright to them is the passing failure of a wish, not a terrifying spiritual disaster. There do come moments of vision, or what seem such, in which the irrevocable past rises before them and they seem for the moment to repent and seek the irrecoverable "with strong crying and tears"; but it is a passing emotion soon replaced by the "fulness of bread" that still remains to them. "Thus Esau despised his Birthright." It is out of a depth of soul unknown to such that men repent.

Let us then pray,

For the grace of true repentance. Let us pray for such insight into life as will enable us to estimate it at its true values. Let us pray for a deep sense of the meaning of our Christian Birthright.

Lord, we beseech thee, grant thy people grace to withstand the temptations of the world, the flesh, and the devil; and with pure hearts and minds to follow thee, the only God; through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

The Kyrie Eleison

The cry for mercy which goes up to God in the Kyries is an echo of the prayer of the Publican: "God be merciful to me a sinner." That we are sinners is no Christian discovery, though Christianity first made known the full meaning of sin. The conviction of their own sinfulness in the presence of whatever notions they may have had of God is one of the fundamental human conceptions. It lies at the root, indeed, of a vast amount of religious cultus and is the explanation of much that is awful and

revolting in religious rites. When those rites reach the climax of horror in human sacrifice, when a recreant people "built the high places of Tophet . . . to burn their sons and their daughters in the fire," when a prophet testifies to the prevalence of the abominable custom in the words of protest, "Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, and the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?"—it is a revelation of the intensity of the sense of sin which will be appeased only by the uttermost the sinner can do and suffer. All over the world men were holding up pleading hands over sacrifices which did not destroy the sense of sin or buy them peace and solace, "for it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sin."

When we analyse this fundamental conviction we find that it contains two elements: the pursuit of an ideal which is felt to be compulsory, and the presence of the conviction that the ideal has not been attained. The element of compulsion is found in the belief that the ideal represents the will of some power or person outside of self who will visit failure with consequences. The ideal is not a philosophic or artistic ideal which it is desirable to attain but which one may not choose to strive for—it is not a counsel of perfection—it is the embodiment of a superior will that demands of man that he so shape his life as to conform to it. Over the man there hung constantly the threat of dire penalties ready to follow his failure; in the early period of human history penalties which were seen fulfilled in flood and fire and famine, in war and all its attendant horrors. Or again, in other regions of human thought, the penalties were such that man would face them on the threshold of another world.

Do what he might and could, he had always the conviction of an ideal missed, a law unfulfilled, and will not accomplished.

> What mortal, when he saw,
> Life's voyage done, his heavenly Friend,
> Could ever yet dare tell Him fearlessly:
> "I have kept uninfringed my nature's law:
> The nicely written chart thou gavest me,
> To guide me, I have steer'd by to the end."

This self-judgment upon one's conduct, this certainty of one's insufficiency, this conviction of sin, as it came finally to be called, is what we mean by conscience. Conscience is one's judgment upon one's self in the light of all the knowledge one possesses. "Conscience is no distinct power or faculty of the mind of man, but the mind of man itself, applying the general rule of God's law to particular cases and activities." While no doubt it is true that one is obliged to follow conscience, it is also true that to take conscience as one's guide is a very perilous adventure. One is oftentimes both amused and disgusted at hearing a man proclaim that he must act according to his conscience when it is sufficiently obvious that what he calls his conscience is his prejudice or his self-interest. The political blatherskite and the religious quack proclaim their unfailing devotion to the supreme law of their conscience; a sane Christian is a little more guarded in such appeals. He understands that while his conscience must at any given moment be his guide, and, honestly dealt with, is a morally safe guide, it is nevertheless a guide that needs to be carefully dealt with. He knows that while his action may be for him morally safe, it

may yet be morally wrong. For what is his conscience, or in other words his enlightened judgment, at any moment may be founded on erroneous data, or prejudiced judgment; and that these things are so may be due to his own heedlessness or sloth. In other words, what he is so confidently acting upon may be an erroneous and mistaken conscience. He has to act upon it—yes: but the question then arises, is he guiltless in acting upon it? And the answer has to be that he is not. That he is responsible not only for what he knows, but for what he, in the circumstances of his life, ought to know.

It is absurd, for example, to hold that persons brought up in ordinary Christian surroundings are guiltless in the case of unchristian belief or act because they were ignorant of the teaching of the Christian Church. Their circumstances made it quite possible for them to know Christian teaching and practice: that they have not cared to learn it does not excuse from the obligation. We, of course, can only assess the external obligation: only God can know the internal; but the obligation itself is clear. As the law does not hold ignorance an excuse, so moral law cannot hold voluntary and preventable ignorance an excuse. The means of knowledge were provided and the use of them does not place any undue burden on the person who pleads ignorance. To take an illustration from the purely ecclesiastical field: There can be no manner of excuse for a person brought up in even a nominally Christian family in this country being ignorant of the Divinity of our Lord, and the obligation to worship Him. A person brought up in the Episcopal Church cannot be excused, through ignorance, from the obligation of fasting. Such an one may have a perfectly clear conscience

in his neglect of the days of fasting and abstinence, but it is an erroneous conscience and a voluntarily erroneous conscience.

How often one hears people say: "You know I am quite ignorant of such things. I was never taught them. In the parish where I went to church they were never mentioned," when the things in question were elementary principles and practices of the Christian religion. The result is an uninformed and erroneous conscience. Can we say that action contrary to the mind of the Church is in such case innocent? There was no doubt a primary and sinful neglect on the part of the teaching authority to set out clearly the mind of the Church. It is no doubt deliberate sin on the part of the clergy when they ought to teach clearly and plainly Christian obligations to fail so to do. The fact that such teaching is not popular is no manner of excuse for its neglect. But I fancy that most priests of experience will receive with a rather large grain of salt the statement in excuse of some neglect that "these things were not taught in the parish where I was brought up." One would want to know whether they actually were not taught, or whether the person in question did not avoid all occasions when they were taught. Every priest knows that the attempt to teach is largely blocked by the refusal to learn. We can hold classes and preach sermons, but we cannot "compel them to come in." Ignorant and erroneous consciences are commonly the result of wilful neglect to learn. Even in cases where the clergy neglect to teach, there are still other means of learning, and the question arises whether they have been adequately used. And by adequately used we mean adequately with reference to one's education and opportunity. It is merely silly, for instance, for a col-

lege graduate to plead ignorance of ordinary Christian belief and practice upon the ground that he had never been taught. How can any intelligent human being in the Western world hold himself excused from knowing at least the elements of Christianity? There needs be much more insistence than is customary on the obligation to know, and on the fact that a person who is acting, as we say, conscientiously, may nevertheless be guilty in the sight of God because of neglect of the plain duty to educate conscience.

It is unfortunately possible to kill the conscience entirely, as one sees in certain classes of criminals. And short of that it appears to be possible to deaden the conscience in regard to certain regions of conduct. There appear to be many engaged in business who regard the law as the only limit of their action. "Is it legal?" is the only question they ask. There arises therefore a curious business morality based on legality and not on love, and which therefore has little in common with Christian morality. In social contact the convention of a social circle—"what everyone does"—takes the place of the Christian conception of life. The child finds the vague morality taught him by the Sunday School or whatever elementary religious instruction he received ignored in the circle in which he moves, most likely in the home circle itself. He is naturally influenced by the stronger environment. As he grows he finds his faint conception of a ruling voice of God smiled at or sneered at by his companions. The result is a perverted judgment ending in an utter lack of response to Christian ideals in the matters concerned. Hence results a curious state of things: You find the membership of the Church largely composed of persons who ignore the elementary

rules of Christian living and acting in certain respects, while in others they act as Christians. We get eminent gentlemen on vestries whose business morality would not stand a Christian scrutiny. We get zealous women workers whose social behaviour displays an utter lack of Christian consciousness. And the youth of the Church abandon all rule or restriction in conduct. It is a curious spectacle, this of a *selective* conscience. It no doubt has always existed, but our contemporary circumstances accentuate it. The young who so gaily throw over obligations to-day are of course those destined to suffer from the moral anarchy they are creating, when in their time they become the older generation.

> You may prate of your prowess in lusty times,
> But as years gnaw inward you blink your bays,
> And see too well your crimes.

I suppose that no one would deny the fact that what we are witnessing to-day is a decadence of the notion of sin. The silly notion which is one of the chief contributions of liberalism to the degeneracy of modern society is that you can throw overboard large portions of the Christian religion and leave the remnant unimpaired and energetic: that you can abandon Christian dogma and retain Christian morality: that you can abandon authority and induce people to follow religion by the seduction of sentimentality: and that you can give up belief in the future consequences of sin and still maintain standards of righteousness which will appeal to the average man. Naturally, it cannot be done, and that it cannot is no longer a theory, but the demonstration of the failure is

all about you. Another generation of the public school product will leave us in utter savagery.

The Christian religion is a whole, a vital organism, of such a nature that to destroy one part is to impair the life of the whole. To suppose that you can have the morals without the dogmas is as absurd as to suppose that a body can function normally without a brain. To suppose that in the training of humanity, and especially young humanity, you can dispense with authority in favor of moral suasion is to display an ignorance of human nature as it exists so radical as to suggest mental incompetence. You must have the Christian religion as a whole or accept the alternative—pure naturalism.

Now at the center of Christian moral teaching is the conception of a will of God which can be known by all and which is binding upon all. There is no possibility of arguing with God. "All souls are mine," in His declaration, and His will is supreme. The willing violation of that will is sin. And if we are to have in the world any morals or any civilization, or indeed any tolerable social order, we have got to recognise the outstanding facts of human nature as it exists and treat it accordingly. Human nature at present consists of masses of human beings who willingly lapse into pure animalism if they are left without control. You may call this pessimism if you like: but you have only to face the facts honestly to see that it is true. Anyone can easily conceive something of what New York or London or Paris would become in six months if all law were suspended. Humanity is held in any sort of order to-day by sheer fear and force. If it is ever to pass beyond that stage it can only be through acceptance of moral ideals which are compul-

sory. Moral ideals which have nothing to commend them but their own inherent beauty may glow with splendor in the pages of enlightened essayists and minor poets, but they will not control the streets of a modern city. The ideal must have back of it some other compulsion than that of moral beauty. And the only adequate driving power hitherto (in part) effective has been the acceptance of the will of God. That God wills a certain sort of action puts it on the level of authority: but only of effective authority when it is added that God not only wills but (unlike the modern teachers whom it is attempted to foist into His place) will enforce His will.

In other words, we need and badly need a revival of the conception of sin: of conduct as being, not desirable or undesirable from a social standpoint, but as being acceptable to a Supreme Judge. "We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that everyone may receive the things done in his body, according to what he hath done, whether it be good or bad." That is the only conceivable effective basis of morals: and it is to that that the conscience of man witnesses.

To teach responsibility for conduct then, to teach the reality of sin, is what we need to insist on to-day. Just with what accent we shall teach them depends on the state of moral development of those we have to teach. It may be true, as Sir Oliver Lodge once said, that the higher man of to-day is not worrying about his sins at all, still less their punishment. That only defines our problem in dealing with the "higher man." To some of us it may seem that there is nothing in the spiritual accomplishment of the "higher man" to justify him in putting himself forward as an example; rather his demonstrated spiritual incompetence will entitle him to keep

silence in all the languages he knows. He appears to consider it an impertinence for God to die for him; he is quite able to look after his own future—in all the worlds there are.

Possibly: but he has not so far demonstrated his ability to do any work with this world in the way of spiritual improvement or moral order. And those whom he is teaching to disregard God and moral law are producing social anarchy. On all this needs impressing the undesirable lesson that sin has results, results of various orders. "Every smallest stroke of virtue or vice leaves its never so little scar. The drunken Rip Van Winkle excuses himself for every first dereliction by saying, 'I won't count this time!' Well! he may not count it, and a kind heaven may not count it; but it is being counted none the less. Down among the nerve cells and fibres the molecules are counting it, registering it and storing it up to be used against him when the next temptation comes." That is the consequence of sin as a non-Christian sees it —Professor William James. Here is the view of a Christian saint, St. Catherine of Siena. "He who is in mortal sin falls into poverty. He has lost the riches of the solid virtues through not following the crucified Jesus, and he cannot assist the poor since he is deprived of divine grace by darkness of soul; he has lost the light and he cannot see the evil or where it is; he commits injustice in place of rendering justice."

Sin results in misdirecting the energies of life, so that the life becomes unfruitful. The life of the sinner is a passionate struggle to attain a satisfaction only to find it vanish as it is grasped. This is the explanation of the feverish haste, the rushing from one pleasure to another which is so characteristic of the life that neglects God.

It has no repose. It snatches eagerly at fruit which decays before it can be eaten. "The bewitching naughtiness doth obscure things that are honest; and the whirl of desire doth undermine the simple mind." The world to-day has gone insane over amusement, which is at once a sign of dissatisfaction and unrest and moral emptiness, and an attempt to escape the haunting sense of a reality which threatens. The present generation is like trembling savages, making a fearful noise in hopes of scaring off the devils. But they only succeed in scaring themselves and the day of reckoning draws nearer. The particular sort of devils which threaten the modern world cannot be driven off by jazz bands and by silly dances.

After all, sin is in ourselves; and the penalty is in ourselves. The real punishment of sin is to be a sinner, and that is a punishment which cannot be avoided and which the conscience enforces upon us at any moment. And forgetfulness of it can be but momentary; the conscience may be dulled, but like the consciousness which is dulled with alcohol it is followed by an awakening that is ever more bitter. Even when the process of deadening conscience is carried to the limit, "the silence of a seared conscience is not peace." You may heap sin on sin in the hope of achieving spiritual insensibility and in the end seem to attain it; but I fancy in the experience of even the most hardened there are moments when the conscience speaks, moments when reality emerges in mockery of our efforts,

> Laughing like sin
> Which steals back softly in a soul half-saved.

Sin is self-estrangement from God. God is love, and His demand on us is ultimately the demand for our love.

To construe the claim of God on life as a claim for dominance, for obedience, the claim of a law-giver to rule, is imperfectly to construe it. There are no doubt certain who are so spiritually undeveloped that they can only understand God as Ruler and Law-giver, who are blind to love. For them a partial and elementary presentation of truth is the only presentation possible. There are children who have experienced rule only as force, and to whom in consequence moral ideals mean nothing: and there are adults who are still children in spiritual development. So far as they can conceive of love at all, they conceive of it as the opposite of justice, as a feeble sentimentalism which lets one off from the deserved results of one's conduct. To such only a very partial and elementary presentation of God is possible. To tell them that God is love is to tell them that He is indifferent to moral values. But those whose vision of God has any clearness, who have seen Him as He is revealed in Jesus, find that sin is the withdrawal or the refusal of our love to God. The breaking of a law, the declining of an obligation, the repudiation of a will, is but the consequence of our own act in breaking the bond of love. The ultimate account of our act is that it is the refusal of love. That is the disaster—we have been content, for our own ends, to repudiate and wound the love of God.

> My sin was as a thorn
> Among the thorns that girt Thy brow
> Wounding Thy soul.

We protest that we do not mean this; but we can only so plead at the expense of our spiritual sanity. To plead thus is to plead that we do not know the nature of our

action. But can any such plea hold good before the bar of conscience? Is not the obvious retort: "You were bound to know. You consider yourself a sane being: is there not a moral obligation to know the nature of your acts?" It is possible that ignorance, like charity, may cover a multitude of sins; but the ignorance we plead is not such ignorance. The ignorance we plead is by the very fact conscious of itself and therefore has ceased to be ignorance in the true sense of the term. We suspect that we are doing wrong, but lest the suspicion should pass to certainty we throw a veil over it and look the other way, and the very act reveals that our suspicion has become certainty. Conscience is too acute to be deceived in that way, and it declines a false peace. "There is no sin which is not the purchase of pleasure at the price of peace."

Sin therefore is an attempt to purchase the impossible. It sells our Lord for the thirty pieces of silver and then discovers that the money does not satisfy and throws it away. It pursues one form of self-gratification after another, only to find in the end that there is no gratification. It tries to deaden thought and conscience by the denial of moral and spiritual responsibility, it goes on to the denial of God Himself: but only to find emptiness of soul in which there is still an echo of the voice of God. There is the struggle of an instinct to love to find the object of love.

I need Thee and I feel Thee and I love Thee;
I do not plead my rapture in Thy works
For love of Thee, nor do I feel as one
Who cannot die; but there is that in me
Which turns to Thee, which loves or which should love.

This failure of sin to find permanent justification is inevitable because "sin is an attempt to get out of life what God has not put into it." God offers rest and peace and satisfaction, and these are offered, not on arbitrary conditions, but on the only conditions on which they can be had. Peace is rest in God, the achievement of union with Him: and only when this is achieved will the restlessness of conscience be stilled, only then are we able to pass a judgment on life which gives satisfaction.

May we not then construe our *Kyrie,*—our cry for mercy—as a cry not only for forgiveness, but for that which lies beyond forgiveness—vision? Sin blinds. We stand on some beautiful clear night looking up into the unclouded heaven, with our eyes fixed on some one star, and of a sudden the star disappears! We see no cloud, but we know that some wisp of mist must have passed across the line of vision, some poor earthly thing which still was able to hide the light of heaven from our eyes. Such is sin, a poor earthly thing, a passing mist which we mistake for an abiding satisfaction, and the vision of heaven goes and we choose an earthly thing. But we know the mist will pass, and we know that while it lasts the star shines on: and we know that all that sin brings will pass, but the effect of the sin will not pass till we cry to God— So we say, "Kyrie Eleison, Lord, have mercy. Open our eyes and give us our hearts' desire." For at bottom we are not deceived: we know that sin is nothingness and that God is love. We know that sin is despair and that all our hope is God.

> For I dwell sure that God is love;
> Beholding all the grief and pain,
> I trow He wills that man should move
> From Peace through Peace to Peace again.

And from the shadows struggling out
I yet find this to lighten care:
"Belief is better far than doubt;
Hope fashions men, but slaves Despair."

THE SIXTH MEDITATION

THE COLLECT FOR GUIDANCE

The *Collect for Guidance* is taken from the Breviary, Roman and Sarum, where it is used as one of the prayers said in chapter after Prime.

Experience of a good many questions from those who are eager to follow the Mass intelligently suggests that something might be said here usefully as to its general structure and terminology and where the various parts are to be found. Roughly, the Mass is divided into the *Ordinary* and the *Proper*. The Ordinary is the invariable part which is identical in all masses. The Proper is that part which is peculiar to, and changes with, the day. The heart and center of the invariable portion is the *Canon, or series* of Prayers which include the Consecration. The Proper, or variable portion, includes the Introit, Collect, Epistle, Gradual, Gospel, Offertory, a collect called the Secret, sometimes a Proper Preface to the Sanctus, an anthem or antiphon called the Communion, and the Post-Communion Collect. Every day in the year is either a *Feast Day* or a *Feria*. A Feria is simply a week day on which no Festival occurs. All Sundays are Feast Days. As the Sundays and the general course of the Church's Seasons depend on the fluctuating date of Easter, while most of the saints' days and other Festivals are attached to a particular day of the month, a sort of dove-tailing or adaptation of the one list to the other is necessary. Often a saint's day will fall upon a Sunday or other Festival and rules are required to cover such coincidences, so that one may know which day is to be observed and which transferred to another date or merely "commemorated." These rules are based on the relative importance of the Feasts and Ferias. Even the Ferias vary in importance, those of Advent and Lent, the Ember and Rogation Days, and certain Vigils being ranked higher than many Feasts. All Sundays are Feasts Days of importance, only to be superseded by Festivals of high rank. On ordinary Ferias the mass of the preceding Sunday is said. Some of the *Greater Ferias,* such as the week days of Lent and the Ember and Rogation Days, have Proper masses of their own. In a complete missal the invariable Ordinary of the mass will be found near the center of the book, preceded by the *Proper of the Season,* beginning with Advent. After the Proper of the Season comes the *Proper of the Saints,* according to the calendar. Then, as many Festivals are not counted as of sufficient importance to have complete Proper masses of their own, there follows a section called the *Common of the Saints,* which contains masses to be used for certain *classes* of saints, such as martyrs, confessors, virgins, etc. At the end are the *Votive* Masses, that is Masses for special needs or occasions such as Requiems, the Nuptial mass, for the sick, and many others.

NOTE. For those who wish to be able to follow all parts of the Mass on days not provided for in our present Prayer Book we know of no better book than the "Anglican Missal," published in London by the Society of SS. Peter & Paul, which can be obtained in pocket size for the laity, and which is a complete missal.

Let us listen to the Words of Holy Scripture:

The Spirit suffered them not.

Let us picture:

ST. PAUL, in his eagerness to preach the Gospel. To him this was no self-chosen task. He had not, after mature meditation, made up his mind that it was the right thing for him to enter upon the work of the ministry. This work had been thrust upon him by the direct intervention of the Risen Lord. Our Lord had broken in pieces S. Paul's own theory of his life and duty, and had made him an Apostle and shown him what things he must suffer in that vocation. He had constrained him with the sense of a tremendous obligation, so that he felt, "Woe is me, if I preach not the Gospel." To us it would seem, that being thus seized and constrained and driven forth, that at least the Providence of God would have provided that he should preach the Gospel in the calm and peace of an assured mission without other pain or opposition than would spring from the natural opposition of men to a system that was strange to them. So we read with surprise that long catalogue of trials and sufferings that was his lot. We see him going eagerly forth to his preaching, and hindered and overruled in it by the will of God Himself. We see him in perplexity as to the meaning of the will of God. We see him going "bound in the Spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there." We see him

with his face set toward Asia, and "forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach the word" there. We see him, with his companions, assaying "to go into Bythinia: but the Spirit suffered them not." "Without are fightings, and within are fears." Such was constantly the course of his life.

Consider, first,

That S. Paul does not fret or exclaim against this state of things; he takes it as the natural condition of his ministry. He recognises that his own will must be constantly referred to, and will often be over-ruled by the will of God. For he is not only exercising a ministry, but he is being therein trained to the worthy exercise of it. The ripeness and maturity of character to which he finally attained was the outcome of a will that was disciplined to watch for and to follow in all things the will of God. There is only one success in life; and that is success in seeing and following God's will. S. Paul's greatness as a preacher of the Gospel lay much in this, that he had no plans of his own. His one plan was to preach where God sent him, and under the conditions that God provided. He might have his plans overset by illness, or thwarted by unforeseen circumstance, or deliberately negatived by the revealed will of the Spirit, and he never shows irritation or resistance. It is not that S. Paul was of a submissive nature, or without tenacity of purpose. He could assert himself on an occasion with a deliberateness and a sternness that are unrivaled. But never against the will of God. This was because he had learned to dwell with Christ in heavenly places, and to draw the strength and direction of his life from thence. He had that true humility which consists in the utter

abandonment of oneself to the will of God. Yet that he did not do this without pain is clear from the note of suffering and disappointment that now and again reaches us through his letters. He is not as one who greatly endured suffering, but as one who greatly accepted it.

Consider, second,

That the thing we find hardest in the spiritual life is the constant and ready reference of our wills to the will of our Lord; that the last thing that we die to is self. We may seem dead to the world, and dead to sin, but there will still linger something of self-will about us. We still resent the interference with our plans, as we think it, that the providential ordering of life brings about. We still dislike to find that our wisdom is not the wisdom of God: even when it is obviously the Spirit that is hindering us, we are prone to try to go on. Consider, that this can only be because our union with our Lord is not yet perfect, and the rift within that union is measured by the declination of the will from the will of our Lord. Perfect union is expressed by perfect harmony between our will and His; when that exists, we only need, as did S. Paul, to know our Lord's will to have it become ours. This is not to lose our will, or to have it weakened, but to have it attain its mature strength, to become the underlying solidity of our character. In all social relations weakness is expressed by disunion; and so it is in our relation to our Lord; there is no so great mark of weakness of character as is expressed by the isolation of the will. True humility which reaches its zenith in complete surrender to the will of God, knowing and wanting no other will, is also the attainment of completest strength. Humility

is far from being the mark of weakness that the world thinks it; it is the realization for oneself through self-surrender, of those hidden sources of strength which abound in the Godhead itself. The truly humble person is as strong as God.

Let us, then, pray,

For self-abandonment to the will of God; that through leaning on Him we may find Him strong to shape and direct our lives.

O God, who art rich in forgiveness, and for this cause willedst to assume our lowly flesh, that thou mightest leave to us an example of humility, and make us steadfast in all manner of sufferings; grant that we may always hold fast the good things which we receive from thee, and as often as we fall into sins, may be raised up by repentance, through thy mercy, and the merits of the same Jesus Christ our Lord.

The Collect for Guidance

The collect which follows the Kyrie is identical with the last collect in the Office for Confirmation. It is a general prayer for guidance and protection and appears to have been introduced into the Communion Office as an appropriate conclusion to the recitation of the Commandments. The petitions which form the body of the collect are for actions which are commonly attributed to the Holy Spirit and the fact that it is the final collect of the Office for Confirmation emphasizes this fact. We cannot go far astray, therefore, in thinking of this collect as a prayer for the guidance and help of the Holy Spirit in fulfilling the law of God.

We need to think of the Holy Spirit as the indwelling Spirit, as the Spirit Who inhabits the souls of the faithful. His work is largely concerned in helping us in the development of the virtues which are the expression of the spiritual life. When we are made Christians in baptism we are endowed with certain powers and capacities, or in theological language, certain virtues are then infused into our souls. These are the cardinal and theological virtues and are strictly speaking supernatural endowments, that is, they are the creation of grace. There are also conferred upon us the gifts of the Holy Spirit and the spiritual life may not inaptly be described as the process of bringing the gifts and virtues to maturity and fruitfulness. They are conferred as it were in germ; they are potential powers. Their growth depends upon our use of them. We practice the virtues and we bring forth the fruits of the Spirit when we cooperate with the Holy Ghost in the work of our spiritual development. This work is a work of cooperation. We are according to that which is said, "Working out our salvation with fear and trembling because it is God who worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure."

The everyday life of the Christian is a life which depends upon and draws from hidden sources of energy which are within. Its effort is to develop that which already exists, to use that with which it is endowed. This is the ground for constant hopefulness, the basis of the confidence with which we face life. We feel as St. Paul felt when he said, "I can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth me." There is no limit to the power of God. There is therefore no limit to our possibility of accomplishment. The limits of our actual

accomplishments are self-imposed. They are the limits of our cooperation with God.

Looking directly at the details of the collect we note in the first place that it treats the human being as a whole. It is our hearts and bodies that are concerned. As we might paraphrase it, our spiritual and physical natures, the whole man; and there is certainly need to insist on this extension of the reach of sanctification to our whole nature. The body, to be sure, has become a fetich in our day, its worship is widespread, but it is a heathen worship, a delight in physical development. One would not, of course, criticise that development, only one would insist that the body is a sacred thing and that the misuse of its powers is a kind of blashphemy. One can hardly help connecting this purely pagan devotion to the body with the equally pagan sensualism and sexuality with which so much of modern literature is saturated. Literature of course is but a symptom and indication of what men are thinking about. One cannot help seeing modern life losing certain qualities which it can ill afford to lose. Especially I think it can ill afford to lose the reserve and modesty, that were once ours, and are fast vanishing. It is easy to smile at some phases of their exaggeration and even unreality. But they had a value of a very positive kind and one really cannot think that the young lady who is disposed of by the epithet "Victorian" and "Puritan" is really eclipsed by the loud-talking, slangy, profane and cigarette-smoking creature who parades in a state of approximate nudity on the bathing beach of the modern summer resort. There are certain kinds of overemphasis which are better than no emphasis at all and a certain physical re-

serve is a necessary characteristic of a Christian. The body is an instrument, an instrument of the Spirit for sanctification or of the passions for degradation. It is a partaker of our sanctification because it is a partaker of immortality. We shall rise again "with our bodies"; that is, the eternal world is a world of embodied spirits. In the present we act through our body and we know of no acts which are not bodily conditioned. Therefore, we are exhorted to present our "bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is our reasonable service." And our purity is based in the fact that our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit. "Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own." Then surely it would be the last misfortune of a spiritual being to "grieve" the Holy Spirit.

So we go to God with our prayer for direction, for this is a very perplexing world and there are many voices. There is a clamor always in our ears and conflicting cries which would guide our feet. There are cries "Behold, he is in the desert," and then cries "Behold, he is in the secret chamber," but we are not to listen. Rather we are to listen to the voice of the Spirit which is our true and safe guide, the voice that comes through revelation, the voice which is made clear after devout prayer. For there is a guidance of the Spirit which comes to each of us. And I do not at all mean that this guidance is exclusively the guidance of an inner voice; it is commonly the external voice of authority, but we need the inner help of the Spirit to submit and to follow. When we pray for guidance we pray to get rid of self-will and prejudice and to open our souls to the voice of God,

however that voice may make itself heard. And we remember that it requires "the mind of the Spirit" to interpret spiritual things.

Apart from the authoritative voice of God speaking through revelation and the Church there is a limited source of guidance in our fellows. It would be strange if this were not so, for we are fellow-members of the Body of Christ, and in consequence members one of another. We have constantly to depend on one another in many things. It would be strange if spiritual helpfulness were excluded. And yet we have to remember that it is only the expert who can speak with any sort of authority. The only man who can speak with authority on spiritual matters is the spiritual genius. It is through the insight given by our spirituality that we can understand the natural world, man, and the Scriptures. This insight gives a man his perception of spiritual values of all sorts. Spirituality developed to a high degree gives spiritual authority. Without spiritual development a man's word in spiritual matters has no value. We recognize that it is only the expert who can judge in matters of art or music or literature. And then we listen to a man without any personal experience of religion in matters of the spirit. We treat respectfully the utterances of infidels and worldlings, in matters of which only the spiritual expert can have knowledge. We commit the religious education of children to those who are themselves spiritually ignorant. Those who attempt to interpret religion are denying religious truth, are like a deaf man setting himself to interpret a symphony of which all that he can hear is an occasional drum beat or the blare of the bass.

It is their intimate association with the Spirit, their

personal training by Him, that gives the Saints their authority in spiritual matters. They speak that which they know and testify that which they have seen. Ultimately the Saints are the embodiment of the tradition of the Church. There are other organs of enunciation, but we may rightly call the Saints the organs of verification. They bring the tradition that they have received to the test of experience and hand it on to their successors enriched by the further test of their living. It is this that gives us confidence in the teaching of the Church, that its formal dogmatic teaching has been brought to the test of a living experience in every generation. In the search for truth one philosophy is constantly being displaced by another, because the philosophy of one generation does not supply the intellectual needs of the next. The scientific dogma confidently asserted in one generation is displaced by the growing experience of the next, but the dogmas of the Catholic faith are constantly being verified by the experience of the Saints. The dogma of our Lord's divinity, for example, is found true by each generation which worships Him. The dogma of the Real Presence is not replaced or changed, but each generation finds it true and satisfying. The testimony of the Holy Spirit through human experience is therefore cumulative testimony. It increases in strength as the generations pass. The evidence for the truth of the Catholic religion is vastly stronger to-day than it was in the year 100. Intellectually it has been thought out and its content appreciated. It has been successfully defended against an unceasing series of attacks, with the result that its defense has been demonstrated to be impregnable. On the other hand, it has been *used* unceasingly and has stood the pragmatic test

of experience. Its theory has been verified in so many lives that there is no possibility of doubting it.

It is the Christian theory that this world is guided by the providence of God. That is the explicit statement of our Lord: "Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and not one of them shall fall to the ground without your Father: but the very hairs of your head are all numbered." This particular and minute providence is felt by many to be hard to accept because it is hard to understand. But we do not have to understand it in detail. We have but to believe that all life is under the direction of God. And if we believe at all in a God Who is interested in human life we have to believe that He is not a mere onlooker, but that His interest is an active ordering of the world. The revolt from the belief in Providence really has its roots in the fact that there is much in life that we do not like and which we resent. We cannot conceive, we say, why God should bring about this or that. Possibly not, but that is hardly the question. Still I fancy that we can see more than we want to see. If we will open our eyes we can see that much that we resent is the direct outcome of our own actions. That, however, by the way. What I am at present concerned with is not to justify the ways of God to man, but to emphasize the plain Gospel teaching of the divine ordering of life and the consequent attitude of dependence and obedience to the divine will, however made known. Whatever difficulty such teaching may raise in detail, however this or that fact may be incomprehensible, we are bound to think of God as governing all life, though of course in such wise as to permit full play of our free wills. We inject an element of sin and disorder into life which necessitates, if one may so express it, a modi-

fication of the divine plan, but ultimately the divine will reaches its ends through overruling human perversity. We must accept the divine ordering in all things painful as well as pleasant, in sorrow as well as joy. The temptation to regard the person who escapes from a dangerous situation as a special favorite of Providence and the person who suffers through it as at least overlooked, is profoundly pagan and must be rejected. "God sends all our experience, not merely the part which we have singled out through allegiance to some theory and called good. It is all good, as it comes from God, all meant for our well-being. Our part is to accept it as from the divine wisdom in love."

The providence of God guides us not by miracle but by the ordering of events. The shaping hand of God can often be seen if we look for it. Our Lord impresses on us constantly in His teaching the need of attention to the course of events and especially blames those who disregard them. "And he answered and said unto them, When it is evening ye say, it will be fair weather: for the sky is red. And in the morning, It will be foul weather to-day: for the sky is red and lowering. Ye can discern the face of the sky, but can ye not discern the signs of the times?" The same lesson of attention is stressed in His oft-repeated, "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear." I suppose that there is none of us who looking back over life cannot see the guiding of God therein. Possibly we did not see it at the time, but now we can see where we were guided and, it may be, saved from disaster, or where the way that we were to take was wonderfully opened. Or it may be we can see that what it is now clear to us was an offer of God, we in self-will or ignorance rejected with consequences which

were disastrous. This is clear now. Would it not have been clear then if we had been alert and sensitive to the manifestation of the divine will?

This external guidance of God is supplemented by an interior guidance. To perceive this requires on our part a spiritual sensitiveness to God's voice, however it may come. God does speak to us in the recesses of our spirit. As the result of prayer, the obscure does become clear and the difficult problem solved. There is, as we say, borne in on us the conviction of the course of action we should pursue. We cannot explain this; we cannot make our grounds of certainty clear to others; but we ourselves have arrived at certainty. This is a common spiritual experience and one that can be trusted. No doubt we blunder from time to time and mistake our wishes for the mind of God. But such self-deceit is rather easily detected. We only deceive ourselves when we want to and such deception is not very deep.

This communication of God's will through the spirit is one of the frequent phenomena of sanctity. It is characteristic of the saint that he *knows,* and he knows because he is habitually doing God's will and is therefore in a state of sympathy with God and has developed a certain spiritual receptivity. He knows how to ask according to the will of God; hence the depth and fertility of his prayer life. His prayer is a true communion with God and often he is quite conscious of the immediate response of God. As we study the prayer life of the saints we feel no doubt very far off from such vivid experience. But when we look into our own experience, we find, I think, that it is a difference of degree only. We have some experience and it is of the same order. It is enough to make us understand. The saint seems in con-

stant communication with God, to find Him whenever he turns to Him. That is not so true of us. But it is true that we have this experience occasionally. We have flashes of the consciousness of God, moments of sure communion when we are in the very presence of God. To the saint it seems to us the sun shines all the time, while with us it only in moments breaks through the clouds that habitually veil our sky. We no doubt overestimate the continuousness of the saint's consciousness of God; but be that as it may, the Sun that breaks through our clouds is the same Sun that shines on the saint.

Clearly, then, what we need if we would approach the saint's degree of God-consciousness is the same intense cultivation of sanctity. In theory sanctity is a rather simple thing. It results from correspondence with and use of the grace so freely bestowed upon us by God. The sanctifying grace which begins for us with our communion with God in our baptism need never be forfeited and we may grow up into Him in all things which is the Head, even Christ. This is the theory. The practice is commonly difficult. Besides sanctifying grace there are all the actual graces which constantly aid us on our pilgrim way. It is the common experience that we fall into sin and so forfeit grace, and have to begin over again. Still I am inclined to think that there are more people who have never forfeited the grace of their baptism through mortal sin than we are wont to suppose. My experience as a confessor leads me to this conclusion. Why then is there not visible greater growth in sanctity? I believe that one of the common troubles among "good people"—I mean those who are regular in their duties and do not commit mortal sin

—is a failure in any adequate use of grace. We see the corner of a garden where a few plants are struggling to maintain life, but though they live their growth is stunted. The soil, if we examine it, is as good as that of the rest of the garden. There is the same amount of light and water, but the plants do not grow. Why? The cultivation is defective. The gardener has neglected to attend to this particular spot. There are souls like that, that present a stunted appearance because they are not adequately exercised. You find many "good people" who are good in a negative sort of way. Their environment presents no real temptations, they stagnate and are without spiritual ambition. They have no devotion. They move about in a narrow field of spiritual exercises, but they never go beyond. They hear no voice that calls them. Placid, content, innocent, they still fail to attain what they ought to attain, and what their very circumstances suggest that they attain, a growing sanctity. They are like people in a shut-in valley, who live quiet, peaceful lives, but without real contact with the stirring life of the world. I read somewhere the other day these words, which seem to me to be the utterance of such a soul as I have been trying to describe: "We ought not to sacrifice a single moment of pleasure in an attempt to do something which is too big for us. And as a rule men and women are always attempting what is too big for them. . . . Don't bother yourself by what is beyond you; try and lead a sweet, clean and wholesome life. Keep yourselves in health above everything. Stick to your work and when your day is done amuse and refresh yourselves." This would seem adequately to express the philosophy of the commonplace and if you translate it into terms of religious practice you get the

religion of the commonplace. After all, how do we know that anything is too big for us until we try?

If we are in earnest in our prayer that God will govern us wholly, both our hearts and bodies, we shall be much less looking for an external law of direction than for an internal prompting of the Spirit. There is no doubt an external guide to action. We find this in the teaching of the Christian Church. But between the external guide and the will of the individual there is a necessary link of connection. The rule as law does not of itself move the will. We are only too familiar with the fact that there is often a great gulf fixed between knowing the right and doing the right. An external law has no moving power. Between the machine and its work there has to be power, power applied in such wise that the machine will do its work. And between the right which the intellect sees and the will to accomplish it there must be some power to set the will in operation. This is the power of the Spirit, the ceaseless impulse of the divine Guest. In Him is to be sought the source of right thoughts, right impulses, right determinations. "For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure." Hence the vast importance of interior watchfulness. It is so easy to let the inner voice be unnoticed because our attention is distracted to voices which are more clamorous and more insistent. Amid the hoot of the motors and the rattle of the trains and all the distracting babel of a modern city street it is often impossible to hear the voice of the friend at one's side, unless we listen with concentrated attention. So, when the mind finds so much to distract it and the senses clamor so loud for gratification and when an acquired habit pushes us along the ac-

customed groove, it is not easy so to abstract one's self as to hear the murmur of the conscience and the whisper of the Holy Spirit in the recesses of the soul. And yet it is possible. In the deafening noise of a school yard one manages to isolate and to recognize the voice that one loves. So is it love that guides the trained ear of our spirit to recognize the voice of the Holy Spirit when He speaks to us. "The sheep follow him: for they know his voice. And a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him: for they know not the voice of strangers."

There is the heart of the secret,—that the sheep know the voice of the Good Shepherd. They are quick to recognize it among the shoutings of all other voices. How do they know it? They know it because they have learned to love it; therefore they recognize its least word. It is love that carries them out into the dim pastures where the Shepherd leads them, and where his voice is the only guide amid the mists that cover the fields of life. It is love that makes all the weary way of the pilgrimage possible to them. It is love that kindles the flagging will to glad response to the law. Then can the soul of the servant say, "Lord, what love have I unto thy law! all the day long is my study in it." It is love that lifts the burden, gives the feet liberty to follow the guide. "I will run the way of thy commandments when thou hast set my heart at liberty." We deceive ourselves when in moments of perplexity we tell ourselves that it is the mind that is befogged and the intellect that wants clearing and convincing. Rather it is the heart that has failed. When the heart has been set at liberty, when the affections have been rescued from unworthy ob-

jects and rightly directed, then shall we rejoice and be glad in the restored sense of the divine presence. What we have mistakenly assumed to be intellectual perplexity was just the longing of the thirsty soul after God. "My soul thirsteth for thee; my flesh also longeth after thee: in a barren and dry land where no water is." It may be that the "barren and dry land" where we have been seeking God is the land of speculation. We have sought God as the conclusion of an argument rather than as the object of the heart's desire. That is to seek on the wrong track.

> Not to me
> The Unmoved Mover of philosophy
> And absolute still sum of all that is,
> The God Whom I adore—not this!
> Nay, rather a great moving wave of bliss,
> A surging torrent of dynamic love
> In passionate swift career
> That down the sheer
> And fathomless abyss
> Of being ever pours, His ecstasy to prove.

"That we may be preserved in Body and Soul"—We come back to the thought of our dependence, that day by day we are drawing our life from the Source of all life, our strength from the Source of all strength, and drawing it for use. There are works of God's commandments which have to be executed here and by us. We are what we are because redeemed, sanctified through the mercy of God. The new life which we feel pulsing through our veins is the life of the Son of God which has been imparted to us by our participation in the

sacraments. It is imparted to us as a sacred trust, a trust which carries with it on our part the obligation to obedience and fruitfulness.

Do we find obedience a hard word? If so, we have as yet disastrously failed to understand our relation to God. There is no doubt an obedience which is the result of fear, and is the forced action of an unwilling will. Such an obedience is not a spiritual quality. Obedience as a spiritual quality is the glad, eager response of the will of man to the will of God, when he sees that will. It is the offering of love. "We must do all for love and nothing by force," St. Francis de Sales says, "We must love obedience rather than fear obedience." And in order to the possession of this virtue, I suppose, we must learn to fix the attention on God Who wills, rather than on the thing willed. John Newton said, "If two angels were to receive at the same moment a commission from God, one to go down and rule earth's widest empire, the other to go and sweep the streets of one of the meanest villages, it would be a matter of entire indifference to each which service fell to his lot, the post of rule or the post of scavenger, as the joy of the angels lies only in obedience to God's will and with equal joy they will lift a Lazarus in rags to Abraham's bosom or be a chariot of fire to bear Elijah home."

Surely that is the only possible outcome of a life that is instinct with love; a grudging love is not love at all. A true love is a love that forgets the very notion of obedience in the passion of its service. It stimulates and draws out strength. The exercise of love is the most dangerous of all adventures. That is what our Lord found when love sent Him into the world on a mission

of rescue. The path of love which His foot touched in Bethlehem, faithfully followed led on to Calvary. St. Mary found that her acceptance of the vocation to the Mother of God was an association with One Whose companionship and love meant a soul pierced again and again by the sword of sorrow. A selfish and indifferent man passes through the world with a minimum of friction. He avoids all obligations which spring out of love and the will to sacrifice self for others that love inspires. It is the man who loves the Lord his God with all his nature and who loves his neighbor as himself who runs risks. It is love that sends men out on perilous quests, that exposes them to misunderstanding and obloquy, that drives them to lives of unselfish labour and often ends by hanging them upon a cross. There is nothing so dangerous as great love.

But also there is nothing so invigorating, nothing that so enables one to face problems which arise out of the providential ordering of our lives; that enables us not only to face the exacting and the perplexing, the hardness and the pain, but enables us to face what is oftentimes more trying, the merely commonplace. That which makes great demands may call out great response, but that which demands just day by day patience and care may easily find us unwatchful. There is a wisdom we would do well often to meditate in the petition in the Lord's Prayer—"Give us this day our daily bread," the bread of grace which will enable us to meet the continual demands of the day. There is a constant drain on our spiritual resources that can only be met by constantly renewed supplies. Therefore we need to go on our way with love and prayer hand in hand.

With heart and eyes unquestioning, friend,
We follow love from sea to sea,
And love and prayer have common End:
"May God be merciful to me."

THE SEVENTH MEDITATION

THE COLLECT

Immediately before the Collect the celebrant kisses the altar, turns toward the people and says "The Lord be with you," then goes to the Epistle corner, says "Let us pray," and reads the Collect. The kissing of the altar is an act of reverence before turning his back on it. Greeting the people with the words "The Lord be with you" is a feature which comes from the earliest forms of the Mass. This salutation is found repeatedly in the Bible (e. g., Ruth ii, 4; II Thess. iii, 16). Anciently it was said before the Collect, the Gospel, the Offertory prayer, the *Sursum corda* the post Communion, the *Ite, missa est* and the Last Gospel. In the proposed revision of our Prayer Book "The Lord be with you" is restored at some of these places. The Collects which we are accustomed to are in great contrast to those used by the Eastern Church, which are generally verbose and ornate, whereas ours are short and plain. Usually the shortest are the oldest. First God is invoked, then the petition is stated, and commonly it is of a very general nature, then the conclusion, "Through Jesus Christ our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with thee in the unity of the Holy Ghost, one God, world without end," or similar words. In the old MSS., where abbreviations and contractions were common, it was customary simply to indicate this ending by its first words,—"Through Jesus Christ . . .", and the endings of many of our Prayer Book Collects are thus abbreviated. But it was the intention of the compilers that the full ending be said, except when more than two Collects are used, in which case the full ending is said after the first and last and none at all after the others. "Let us pray" is said before the first two only. On ordinary Sundays, on Ferias and on the less important feasts, three or more Collects are said; on the greater days but one. When a saint's day falls on a Sunday, or when two feasts fall on the same day, one of them is kept, with its proper mass, and the other is generally "commemorated," i. e., its Collect and Post Communion are said after the Collect and Post Communion of the days observed.

Let us listen to the words of Holy Scripture:

He came to the house of Mary, the Mother of John, whose surname was Mark; where many were gathered together praying.

Let us picture:

THIS gathering of Christians in the house of the Mother of S. Mark. It was perhaps the house where they had gathered, not so very long before, with our Lord to celebrate the Last Supper; the house, too, which served them as the first church where they continued in the daily breaking of the Bread. How full of memories the place was for them already! Here they are gathered this night, a frightened company, with the shadow of persecution lowering over them. Herod had seized James, the brother of John, and put him to death with the sword; and then the hand of the persecutor had been stretched out once more, and had taken Peter also. What could they look for but to be led one by one to the headsman's block? On whom would Herod's choice fall next? What refuge had they from the sword? They have the Christian's unfailing refuge—prayer. There is no doubt or hesitation as to whom they shall turn; their crucified and ascended Lord is all powerful to aid them. Let us picture to ourselves that assembly of the church, passing the hours in supplication. If ever there was a case in which prayer was hopeless we should think that this was one. But they know nothing about hope-

less prayers! And then in the midst of the prayer, the knocking! How natural is that touch of Rhoda, hearing the voice of Peter and then running away without opening the door. How very human is their disbelief in the answer to their prayer, when it came! One fancies that a story often told in years to come!

Consider, first,

That the church grasped from the beginning the meaning and the power of united prayer; they seized upon the sense of our Lord's words that where two or three were gathered together in His Name, there would He be in the midst of them. They understood, however, dimly, that they were more powerful as a body than one by one. Their corporate character, as the Body of Christ, was already present to their consciousness. The first Christians never show any trace of the modern feeling of being a collection of units brought together for certain temporary purposes; they always show their feeling of their oneness as the Body of Christ. It is the Church that we find here this night, offering supplication for one of its members. And how prevailing that supplication is! It opens prison gates and breaks off chains and brings the Apostle to their very doors! It was the mightiest of all instruments that they were wielding, an instrument to the power of which they were as yet unaccustomed; they were making proof of our Lord's promise, whatsoever ye ask in prayer, believing, it shall be done unto you. You have seen a child test a promise that you have made it, and then smile with mingled surprise and joy as it came true. That seems to have been their feeling, and we can almost see the happy joy on their faces as the door at length is opened, and Peter

comes in! All their danger, all their terror would have been for the moment forgotten in the gladness of the reunion. "But he, beckoning unto them with the hand to hold their peace, declared to them how the Lord had brought him out of the prison."

Consider, second,

That intercession has its constant place in the life of the Church; it is the chief business of the Church to pray. The Holy Sacrifice, the Church's great act of worship, is also its great act of intercession. Consider the majestic sublimity of that great prayer of all-embracing intercession, the prayer for the whole state of Christ's Church militant! How it folds, as in a garment of glory, the needs of the whole of the Body of Christ! And how wonderful it is that we may, as it were, insert our own private petitions within the folds of that robe! And one never gets over the strangeness of our little use of the power so richly given. We are so formal and constrained in our religion—or is it so unbelieving?—that we rarely dig up the treasure that is hid in our field. The power of the praying Church is so endless, and our needs are so constant and so great, that one would think that intercession would be the great business of our lives; but, alas, it is not. Every need of the Church, of the parish, one would think, would bring us together; that there would be eager demands for special days and special services of intercession, but there is not. It must be that we have a declining faith that we are caught by the modern spirit of unbelief, or that we have lost grasp on the doctrine of the Body of Christ as a Body endowed with interceding power whose Head is ready to execute every holy wish of His members. We are as those who

have great gifts within their reach, and will not stretch out their hands to take them. Consider, how in the whole history of the Church its first thought in joy has been thanksgiving, its first thought in trouble or need has been intercession.

Let us, then, pray,

For a deeper appreciation of the power of the Body of Christ in prayer; let us pray that we ourselves may better fulfil our obligations as members of that Body.

Almighty God, who hast promised to hear the petitions of those who ask in thy Son's Name; We beseech thee mercifully to incline thine ears to us who have now made our prayers and supplications unto thee; and grant that those things that we have faithfully asked according to thy will, may effectually be obtained, to the relief of our necessity, and to the setting forth of thy glory; through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Collect for the Day

The public prayers of the Church are guided by the varying occasions on which they are offered and notably by the changing seasons of the Christian Year. That year presents to us the whole round of Christian teaching based on the life of our Lord. It is therefore the natural thing that the public prayers should fall in with this sequence and reflect its teaching. This has many advantages, among others the advantage of preventing the teaching of the Church and the clergy from becoming one-sided, from indulging in a false or strained emphasis. It cannot altogether control the pulpit, to be sure, but it can correct and balance it. I remember an old priest

who was an expert in ornithology and whose sermons were said to be filled with bird lore. But though he might preach on birds on Christmas, he would still have to read the Christmas Scriptures, which would offset the birds. One can imagine if there had been no Christian Year that the lessons he would have selected would have been such as contained allusions to birds; and in general an extemporaneous service will tend to repeat the taste and interest of the one who conducts it and will inevitably lack measure and balance. This the stated service of the Church prevents.

The whole drama of our Lord's life and work is year by year set out before us as the basis of our prayers. We begin with the thought of the Advent and we follow our Lord step by step till the clouds close about Him. And then we heed the words of the angel and go back to the everyday duties of life, to life, that is, considered in the light of our Lord's teaching. During the weeks from Trinity to Advent we are engaged in detailed consideration of the Gospel teaching. It is a very profitable study to go through the Eucharistic Scriptures and note how they carefully bring out our Lord's life and work and teaching, to note how the Eucharistic Scriptures for any day are carefully chosen with a view to some special teaching, and how this teaching has been woven into the Collects. The Collects are devotional gems and are literary gems as well. The Collects of the Prayer Book are unsurpassed in their richness and beauty. Most of them are translations of ancient liturgies, but those that were composed at the time of the compilation of the Book of Common Prayer are not behind them in beauty, while those that are translations are put into English at its very best. We have only to compare modern transla-

tions of ancient collects and modern creations to realize the vast difference. The modern lack of form and richness is notable. There is nothing quite so barren of beauty and spiritual suggestiveness as some of the collects provided for feasts of recent creation.

One great purpose and value in the control exercised by the Christian Year over our prayers is that it almost forces us to apply the fundamental facts of Christianity to our daily interests. It compels us to understand religion as a whole and prayer as related to the whole. The divorce between the Christian facts and the Christian acts is, one fancies, pretty general. The Incarnation, the Resurrection, the Ascension, are facts to be believed; but they are not facts to impose present action; they do not send us to our knees. But if they do not we can hardly think we have made much use of them. This is the fact: Christianity is not a system of abstract and static values, but a system which presents facts filled with potent energy, of which we are to make effective use in life. The fact of the Incarnation released and set in operation immense spiritual forces of which we are still experiencing the results. But this is not an exhaustive account of it. The Fall of Constantinople and the discovery of America also set in operation forces of which we experience the results, but the forces themselves have passed out of existence and are no longer available. But the forces released by the Incarnation are as strong and as available to-day as they were when the Angel Gabriel greeted Mary of Nazareth with his *Ave*. We are now in vital relation with Incarnate God, and draw strength and inspiration from Him. Therefore our prayers are not reminiscences of

the past, but appeals to existing reality. So we cannot only pray to God in thankful remembrance of the fact that He has given us His only begotten Son to take our nature upon Him and to be born of a pure Virgin, but we can also plead the fact that we are now, through our relation to Him and His action upon us, His regenerate children, as the basis of our petition daily to be renewed by the Holy Spirit. The fact of the Incarnation thus becomes the inspiration of our prayers and the revelation of our needs, and all other facts of the Christian religion are seen through the treatment of them in the Collects to be capable of the same sort of personal application, so that the order of the services of the Christian Year, if properly attended to, compels a broad appreciation of the Christian life.

Among other things that we are intended to learn from the round of public worship is our own place in the Body of Christ. There is so much in life which tends to isolate us one from another and to promote a purely individualistic attitude. Especially is this so in spiritual matters, where we find it so hard to share our religion one with another, to open even the tiniest crack in the door that closes upon our spiritual experience, that another may know something of our inner life. Now, our Lord no doubt warned us against Pharisaism and told us when we pray to go into our closet and shut the door, but he also told us to proclaim upon the housetops what we hear in the ear, and surely among the most vital things that we hear are the experiences of the Presence and of the working of our Lord in our souls. There is a certain application of the Communion of Saints that we are likely to miss. Among other things that Com-

munion must mean a sharing of spiritual treasures, the treasures of the experience of the love and mercy of Christ.

As one thinks of the state of the Church and what are its failures and needs, one is often oppressed by a realisation of the loneliness of the spiritual life among its members. It is so astonishing and so incomprehensible, for human beings are social beings. We see them everywhere in companies, they meet together to celebrate all sorts of anniversaries and festivals, they initiate innumerable societies of a social character, and then, when their religion is concerned they negative all this, they shut themselves up in their shells and pursue whatever spiritual activities they may have in profound secrecy, or at least in isolation from others. One can hardly overestimate the spiritual loss that has resulted from this state of things, especially the loss that results in the training of the young. If there ought to be a spiritual unit anywhere, that unit should certainly be the family. But how often is the family a spiritual unit? Disregarding the prevalent and lamentable cases of divided families and thinking only of such families as are united in a common faith, how often is there anything *common* about it? Is there anything like a common religious life? Anything the members do in common? They will pray, but they will pray by themselves. There are, it may be, religious discussions, but is there anything like spiritual conference? Perhaps they will come to church together, but even there do they really get together? Is the child taken in hand by the parent and carefully taught how to worship and what he is to aim at and what he is to expect? How often is there any act of united worship in the family? How often does the

father or the mother take the young child into the church to teach him the Real Presence, or the honor due to the saints, or to associate him in some simple act of worship?

I suppose when we think of these things, many of us can look back on our own lives and feel how true they are, and how much we have missed. We did not understand at the time, but we can see now that we were condemned to grope in the darkness, feeling ignorantly for a spiritual experience of some sort. Our instruction was of an elementary sort, and we had really no guide in practice. No one spoke to us, no one told us of what they had found to be true. We were permitted to share in no other experience. What wonder if, left in the isolation and loneliness, we stopped praying when we found that our elementary practices got us nowhere? Does not this sort of treatment of religion as a purely private affair, so private and secret that we do not dream of sharing it, account for a great deal of the abandonment of religion by the young? Their need of society and mutual support finds no satisfaction in their religion. They are unable to make anything out of it by themselves. They share the common feeling that you really mustn't speak about such things, so they lapse and discard religion as a failure. When I look back at the environment of Church life in which I was brought up I can only wonder at the mercy of God which enabled me to preserve any sort of religion at all. I was surrounded by good and pious people, true Churchmen according to their light, but it was a dry Churchmanship, out of which all the sap had evaporated. No one, so far as I know, ever mentioned personal religion or practices of piety. One went through a routine of Morning Prayer on Sundays and on the first Sunday of the month one was sent

out of the church at communion, as from a thing which in no wise concerned children. Teaching was limited to a recitation of the Catechism, with no application. How many thousands have gone through this routine and in the end found it impossible and given it up?

Now, with the most custom-bound people in the world certainly the exercise of a religion which stresses its corporate character must mean some opportunity for corporate action, the development of a devotional system which shall bind individuals together with a sense of their unity in Christ. The Mass naturally is the foundation and the starting point of such a developed system, but the circumstances of modern life need a working out from that basis to a free association in common worship. The day offices of Morning and Evening Prayer do not supply this need. They are too cold, too lacking in personal appeal, too little calculated to call out devotional fervor, and unless we are in the eighteenth century attitude of dislike of "enthusiasm," we feel that devotional fervor is an attitude of soul that we need to create. The old lady who "joined the Episcopal Church" because she liked the Litany was on the right track. She had found something which enabled her to express her need of a common worship. Protestants have found even their free services inadequate to satisfy that need and have created the prayer meeting and the freer devotional meetings which are so popular in connection with Young People's Societies of one sort or another. The Roman Church has created great varieties of "devotions" which quite plainly supply a popular need. The members of the Churches of the Anglican Communion cannot be differently constituted from their neighbors. They have the same spiritual needs, but there is small effort made

to supply them. We do hear of occasional efforts of popular vespers and musical services, for instance. But plainly these are "attractions" rather than devotional appeals. There is a section of the Church which seems possessed with the notion that if you can sufficiently juggle with the Psalter people will come to church in crowds. But I do not believe that the evidence shows that the average man is hankering after a new selection of Psalms or Evening Prayer with one lesson left out. He is no doubt an independent person who will only go to church when he finds there what he wants. I do not believe that experience shows him to want such things. If he is looking for devotional expression he certainly does not.

The prayer meeting, or some modification of it, does undoubtedly supply a devotional need. There must be many people in the Church whose spiritual experience would find expression and stimulus through such an agency. I have never been able to understand why that section of the Church whose interests and sympathies are distinctively Protestant has not developed along such lines. Is it because of an intense conservatism or because there is a feeling that "sectarianism" is not quite the thing socially? These may be the reasons which prevent what seems a natural development, though they are hardly persuasive.

On the other hand, for those who accept the Catholic position of the Church and believe that they are really one with the rest of Christendom, though unfortunately superficially divided, it would seem the most natural thing in the world to adopt Roman developments in the way of devotions. While we for centuries have lain fallow in the matter of public expression in devotion, never going beyond the limits of the Reformation

formularies, the rest of the Church, East and West, has sought expression in a multitude of supplementary services and forms for public and private use, that testify to a remarkable and growing spiritual life, seeking, as all growing life must, ever new channels for its outpouring. It would seem the most natural thing in the world, that we, realising our poverty, should draw upon our neighbors' riches. Such devotions as are embodied in the many litanies and special offices, in Benediction and Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament, in the Rosary, to mention no others, are natural modes of expression to those who accept the whole Catholic faith in regard to the Communion of Saints and the Eucharist. Yet when anyone attempts to provide an outlet for the spirit of devotion and love to our Lord and the saints which is so deeply buried in the Anglican soul, one is met with howls of protest against Romanism which have echoed through Anglican circles for now these four centuries. It appears that time does not stale nor repetition vary this ancient cry. Occasionally the spirit of boredom that it produces drives some unstable soul to seek what they imagine will be peace and quiet in the fold of Peter. But it is better to stop one's ears and to go on to the development of the spiritual life of the Church as best one may, and one may learn to tolerate both the Anglican reproach of borrowing and the Roman scoff of "aping," if in the end one does win souls to a deeper spiritual experience. In the meantime both cries bear testimony to the small hold that the fundamental virtue of charity has upon either vociferator.

As a thing cannot be wrong simply because it is Protestant or Roman, recent or ancient, it is good and right if it fulfils a good and right purpose. I cannot

see how anyone can deny the primary need of means to develop the spirit of devotion among our people. I am willing to praise any helpful attempts in that direction and to assent to the use of means which are intended to further such ends, even when they are not means which appeal to me. And pending the development of "loyal Anglican" instruments for this end, I feel that I am free to make use of the devotional experience of my neighbors and have no hesitation in appropriating them.

And it is well to remember in this connection that much that is characterised as recent or Roman is not really such. Notably, the Rosary and devotions to the sacramental Presence were in existence long before the Reformation, and it is difficult to maintain the Catholic character of the Anglican communion if we are to repudiate all that preceded the Reformation unless it were explicitly taken over in Anglican formularies. If those formularies represent the maximum of what is to be believed and practised, then I am afraid that any claim on the part of the Anglican communion to Catholicity must be abandoned, and a great many of us would have to reconsider our position. But if the Reformation formularies represent only a minimum and a minimum retained with difficulty under trying circumstances, then we are content to take the Anglican communion at its own valuation as certain provinces of the Catholic Church which through historical circumstances have become separated from the rest. Under such a claim we can attach a meaning to the oft-repeated phrase "our Catholic heritage," and take it seriously and proceed to claim it.

The value of such religious acts as the Rosary and sacramental devotions is that they present a vivid spiritual appeal and stir a spiritual response. They develop what

we so sorely need, a feeling of our spiritual unity. We get here in a limited way what we get in the Mass, a consciousness of our immediate union with Christ and with one another, and especially, I think, with one another. Such services tend to abolish the feeling of isolation and to break down our individualism. Morning and Evening Prayer do not do that. Even their present advocates realise that there is a need of what they call "hearty" services as a supplement to them. But devotions draw people together and make them feel their essential oneness. I do not here plead for any special devotion, though I confess my preference for those which have grown up in the Western Church in the course of centuries and embody an age-long spiritual experience. But I do plead for a more elaborate and flexible spiritual practice and for greater tolerance of methods with which we are not ourselves perhaps in sympathy. Neither "dryness" nor "highness" are ideal expressions of Catholicity.

The average Anglican parish, as I know it, has very little coherence. It does not really form a unit, but is rather a group of units arbitrarily and artificially brought together. They are like the atoms in a molecule, easily separated by the application of certain forces. They are held together by a kind of loyalty to an institution, but have no mutual attraction. The attempt to weld these groups into a true unity is one which is beset with great difficulty, and I am convinced is impossible when conducted, as in the past it has uniformly been conducted, on social lines. There is small use in attempting to bring together socially people of quite different social habits and experiences. I do not believe that it is impossible to unify them spiritually. However socially diverse people may be, they can find a common ground in spiritual ac-

tion and can find themselves growing together in spiritual experience. I am convinced that a parish which attempts no social appeal and sets itself to the development of a consciousness of their union with our Blessed Lord and with one another, is on the only possible road to spiritual success.

Not, of course, that one would at all deprecate or depreciate or underrate the value of the set prayers of the Church. It is only that their value is a different value and needs, it would seem, supplementing by more intimate devotions. I shall have much to say a little later on the nature and value of the central prayers of the Eucharist, but one may say here of all the public prayers that they are framed as the prayers of a community, and therefore in general terms, and are concerned with universal interests. It is well that we should be clear about this, and accustom ourselves to be attentive to the universal interests of the Christian and of the Church. It is these interests which primarily draw us to the public services. We feel our relation, not to the particular group of people, but to all Christians scattered throughout the whole world. It helps us to get rid of sectarian bitterness and narrowness and to understand the meaning of the "Holy Church throughout all the world," that we are not members of a sect, but of the Body of Christ, and are vitally interested in all its manifestations. We long for the time when there shall be a clear way to unity among Christians. At least these are our ideals. Unfortunately we do not always live up to them. We are often ready to consent to the abstract while we are revolted by the concrete. I heard of some poor souls the other day (I have no doubt that they would enthusiastically have taken part in a day of

prayer for the reunion of Christendom) who were violently angry because in the church they attended the officiant prayed for the Pope. Such an attitude is hardly consistent with a belief in the Holy Catholic Church, unless we mean by that the Anglican Communion exclusively. But the Anglican Church, thank God, has never made any such exclusive claim, and even if it had, we have rather high authority for praying for our enemies.

Our general and Catholic interests, then, are what we must expect that the formal and stated services of the Church will chiefly be concerned with. We shall have general confessions and general thanksgivings and prayers for the whole state of Christ's Church Militant. We shall find the broad teaching of day and season collected for us in general statements. But we may also find room within the embrace of these general prayers to creep in with our own small and humble needs. After all, each one of us is a particular under the general. The general is not an abstract, but is the sum of many concretes. One likes to think of the worshipping congregation with attention fixed on the majestic flow of the liturgy and watching for the opportunity to make their own petitions part of the general offering,—to insert, as it were, in the crevices of the Mass their own individual needs. So the prayers go up,—those stately and formal prayers, splendid in the decoration of the marvelous diction,—freighted with the detailed needs of our daily life. There, we feel, is all the diversity of the congregation melted and cast into the unity of the Body of Christ.

And then one likes to think of those whose general needs are covered by these general interests, though all unsuspecting. The sweeping course of the Litany, for instance, or the prayer for all sorts and conditions of men,

—how they draw in and unfold the manifold needs of men, and as each prayer passes the lips of the priest, some soul seizes it and gives it a personal application. The life-line is thrown out to some unthinking sailor tossing on the sea, sleep is drawn to the pillow of the waking sufferer, a hand is stretched out to hold back the girl who is trembling on the edge of spiritual shipwreck, a touch recalls to sanity a careless man. We pray for those who would disclaim all need or wish for prayer. We pray for those who have no one to pray for them, and the priest at the altar is bearing before God all the needs that his work has made known to him. He prays,

> Let not one of these
> Be wanting in the day thou countest up
> The jewels in Thy diadem of saints.
> I ask not for the glories of the world,
> I ask not freedom from its weariness
> Of daily toil; but, Oh, Lord Jesus Christ,
> Let Thy omnipotent prayer prevail for them
> And keep them from the evil. In the hour
> Of trial, when the subtle tempter's voice
> Sounds like a Seraph's, and no human friend
> Is nigh, let Thy words live before Thee then,
> And hide Thy lambs beneath Thy shadowing wings,
> And keep them as the apple of Thine eye.
> My prayers are ended if Thy will be done
> In them and by them. Till at last we meet
> Within the mansions of our Father's home,
> A circle never to be sundered more,
> No broken link, a family in heaven.

With our faithlessness and our stupid doubts about prayer we never know how we are injuring others and limiting the power of God. The severest limitation on

God's power to answer prayer is our own character. We pray as though we were going to answer the prayer ourselves; that is, we are chilled in our intercession because we cannot imagine how an answer could be given. But once we raise our imagination high enough to embrace God, doubts of prayer vanish.

We come back to the united prayer of the Body as the expression of a spiritual force. The answer to a great many questions raised as to answers to prayer is found in this thinking out of the fundamental axiom that prayer is commonly a corporate act and that its answer comes through cooperation. God no doubt acts directly in answering prayers, but far more than we have been accustomed to think is human cooperation required. Numerous instances occur to us when we run over the field of prayer. We pray for missions, but we do not expect missions to be successful by the mere exertion of divine power. We pray for the conversion of sinners, but we understand that for their response to grace an opportunity is essential. In praying for the sick, a Catholic, at any rate, does not leave out of account medicinal means, and even on the basis of certain theories of psychological treatment, the response of the patient to the suggestions of the treatment would seem to be essential.

What prayer in any case does is to bring about a release of spiritual force, through bringing the human will into cooperation with the divine will. There is limitless spiritual force in the universe, but men have mostly centered their attention on the discovery and use of material forces and are very backward in their knowledge of the spiritual. Only here and there some exceptional person is found with the knowledge and training which fits him to cooperate with God in the application of spiritual

power to life. Those exceptional persons we call saints and are tempted to regard them and what is alleged about them with suspicion as abnormal personalities. Probably the day will come when we shall understand them to be the perfecly normal product of the Church and their mastery of spiritual force as the result of their relation to God. Some day we shall wake up to the promises of God. Some day we shall understand what it means to be fellow-workers with Him. Then we shall understand the meaning and the power of intercession, of the spiritual energy which is in the Body of Christ. Then we shall wake up to the Mass—and what a glorious day that will be.

THE EIGHTH MEDITATION

THE EPISTLE

After the collect or collects comes the most outstanding feature of the first half of the Mass,—the reading of Scripture Lessons. In primitive times there was no fixed number of lessons read, nor was their length determined. Then it became the custom to have three, the Prophecy (an Old Testament lesson: to Christians all the Old Testament is a prophecy of Christ), the Epistle and the Gospel. Since the sixth century the number has been confined to two, the Epistle and Gospel with which we are familiar, except on a few days such as Good Friday and the Ember Days. The "Epistle" would be more accurately described as a "Lesson," for it is not always from one of the Epistles. The Prayer Book has "epistles" taken from Revelation and Acts, and the proper Masses for the week days in Lent and on many saints' days have "epistles" from the Old Testament. The appropriateness of the matter of the Epistles and Gospels is generally plain enough on the saints' days and the great days of the Church's seasons, but there appears to be no definite system governing the choice of those for ordinary Sundays.

The new revision of the American Prayer Book provides, between Epistle and Gospel, that "Here may be sung a Hymn or an Anthem." This rubric would restore, officially, one of the oldest features of the Mass, the *Gradual.* To alternate readings with Psalm or hymn-singing is a universal and natural liturgical custom, derived from the worship of the synagogue. Any missal which is complete gives the proper Graduals for all masses. They generally consist of two verses from the Psalter, two *Alleluias,* another Psalm verse, then a final *Alleluia.* The *Alleluia,* being an exclamation of rejoicing, is omitted in Lent, on fast days and at requiems. On certain days there follows, after the Gradual, a hymn called the *Sequence.* Many authorities consider the Sequence for requiems, the *Dies irae,* the finest of all hymns.

Let us listen to the words of S. Paul:

Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world.

Let us picture:

S. Paul writing this last Epistle to S. Timothy. There is a note of age and of weariness in this letter, as of one who feels that the end is near, and experiences relief in the feeling. "I am already being offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith." And although S. Paul always shows great personal affection for his children in Christ, we feel here a great passion of love for S. Timothy and longing for his presence and sympathy. "I have remembrance of thee in my prayers night and day; greatly desiring to see thee." "Do thy diligence to come shortly unto me." And then this note of pain, "Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world." "Demas, my fellow labourer," he had written once. There is no disappointment like the infidelity of those whom we love. To find that those whom we trusted, who have shared our labours, and have seemed to share our ideals and our aspirations, and whom we felt that we could lean on in the hours of discouragement when we needed help and sympathy, are unworthy and have left us to fight the battle alone—there is no pain like that. As we bring before us the picture of S. Paul at this crisis we seem to see the

hand tremble and the tears fall. What were bonds and imprisonment and all the rest of the trials to this! The thought of Demas, the fellow labourer, the man who had put his hand to the plow and turned back, would henceforth be to him as a knife plunged into his heart.

And consider, first,

That the turning back of Demas was of the most intolerable kind. He had not become discouraged and fearful, as S. Mark had upon an occasion, and been repudiated impatiently as unworthy to share in the labour of the Gospel. He does not seem to have become bewildered in his faith and felt, in his perplexity, that he could not go on. He did not despair of the coming of the Kingdom which had been promised in terms of immediacy, and say, as some, "Where is the promise of his coming?" He fell away because he loved this present world. Loved it! How pregnant with meaning is that phrase! We understand it, perhaps, only too well. All the luxurious, sensuous life of that many-colored world of Asia Minor called him. The brilliant crowds that filled its streets, the splendor of its entertainments, the rare beauty of its temples, the excitements of its games and its races, the public joy in the festivals of its Gods, the seductive beauty of its women, its baths, its wine, its perfume, its flowers—they stole upon his senses and filled him with the nostalgia of the world. Perhaps he looked at the passing show out of gloomy eyes as, wrapped in his cloak of an Apostle, he realised that he had cut himself off from all that. Then the possibility of going back again and being a man like other men came to him, and he dallied with the thought, and, it may be, pitied himself, and wondered whether his isolation was not mere

foolishness. After all, neither he nor his master seemed to be making much impression on the world they sought to convert. To convert—what a wild dream it was to expect to convert this world that was going on unheeding of S. Paul and his mission! How could a handful of men convert this heedless, laughing, self-satisfied world he saw about him. And then came the moment when the inrush of temptation was too much for him, and he threw aside the marks of his Apostleship and plunged back into the world, realising that he loved it, determining to have it to the uttermost. I wonder what his end was? How did he meet that hour when his departure, too, was at hand?

Consider, second,

That the severity of the Gospel must have tried men then, even more than it tries them to-day. We have succeeded in softening that severity; we have drawn thin the line that separates the Church and the world. We say to ourselves that we live in a Christian world, and that separateness is no longer needful. We think of society as Christian, and that therefore it rules, its conventions, its habits, are Christian. At least, we need not scan them very closely. There is little, even in the life of the Church, to hold us to a stern sense of bearing witness to the Gospel of Jesus, to impress upon us the urgency of those who have to bear a message to a perishing world. We are able to love the world without our love being made a reproach to us save by a few fanatical preachers. Demas would not find it now necessary to leave S. Paul; he could remain without reproach in his ministry; he could be the idolized pastor of a devoted flock. The world—what is the world? Do we very well know?

Can we define it with any feeling of certainty? We feel, perhaps, that any definition in terms that S. Paul would have used, would be disastrous, would empty our churches, would leave us, if we accepted it, in hopeless isolation. Can we, perhaps, sympathise with Demas, as we imagine him gloomily watching some gay procession dancing through flower-strewn streets, and feeling the passion of it all arise in his heart? Or is it S. Paul that we sympathise with as we think of his heart breaking over the loss of the child he had begotten in the Gospel, and now lost?

Let us then, pray,

To be delivered from the disquietude of this world. Let us pray to realise that we are pilgrims and strangers here, and seek a city.

Grant us, O Lord, not to mind earthly things, but to love things heavenly; and even now, while we are placed among things that are passing away, to cleave to those that abide; through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Incline our Heart, O Lord, unto Thy testimonies, and turn it away from beholding vanity: that Thou mayest detach us from the love of earthly things, and unite our affections to things above; through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

The Epistle

The Church goes on day by day reading to its children the Holy Scriptures. It no doubt has in mind among other things thus to encourage and direct them themselves to read the Scriptures in private as an aid to the formation of their spiritual character. But the indications are

that the Scriptures are less read to-day than at any time since the art of reading became general. There are various reasons for this decline. The Reformation with its theory of the "Bible only" and private interpretation gave a great impulse to private Bible reading. People had a comfortable sense of discovering their religion for themselves and a pride in their discoveries in the field of revelation. Multitudes doubtless got great help and comfort through this direct and daily contact with the word of God, but the biblical studies of the last century have done much to dishearten this private searching of the Scriptures. The abandonment of the doctrine of verbal inspiration undermined the "Bible only" theory and left the individual reader in a state of great perplexity. The plain man became conscious that something had happened to his Bible and was vaguely disturbed by ill-understood sermons and writings in which he was told that "the conclusions of criticism" had rendered the old view of the Bible untenable. The air the plain man had breathed so contentedly had become disturbed by the breezes of Modernism and he now hears of the necessity of the "reconstruction of doctrine," "the re-casting of creeds," and of the "abandonment of dogma" till his head is in a whirl and he is tossed by the waves of unknown seas far from his accustomed moorings.

The movement of criticism was inevitable and desirable, but the results could not help being disturbing. It was, I suppose, inevitable that many wild and unverified hypotheses should be announced as "the assured results of criticism." What was nothing less than a revolution in the plain man's conception of the Bible could not take place without great unsettlement. It is perhaps inevitable also that destructive criticism should bulk much

larger and occupy more attention than constructive. The process of determining the *provenance* of the various books of the Bible had to precede the determination of their teaching, where the books themselves were their own authority. Where the Church was acknowledged as the authoritative keeper and interpreter of the books the case was somewhat different, but the churches of the Anglican communions have been so deeply influenced by the Protestant tradition as to inspiration of the Bible and so little influenced by their own announced theory, that we have felt the strain almost as deeply as the Protestant bodies.

What is very much needed to-day, if people are to be brought back to a personal and devotional use of the Holy Scriptures, is clear and constructive teaching as to the use and place of the Scriptures in life to-day. In place of a theory of verbal inspiration and infallible text we need to see the Spirit of God working through the history and literature of a people and deducing from it certain lessons "for our learning." We need to recognize that inspiration is the outcome of the action of the Holy Spirit on chosen souls, stimulating and guiding them to the performance of God-given work. We need to learn that it is what the Holy Spirit teaches and not the form of the teaching that is important for us, and we need more than all to understand that the Church is the witness and keeper of Holy Writ; nor is anything to be required to be believed as necessary to salvation but such things as the Church declares to have been committed to her in the Holy Scripture, delivered to her by God.

We need to-day on the basis of our new understanding of the Scriptures a constructive treatment of them as a basis of theological and devotional study. Such a constructive view will teach us to distinguish between the

teachings of the Holy Spirit in matters of faith and morals and the temporary and local setting of that teaching which adapted it to the use of those to whom it was first delivered. We can easily dispense with the theory of inspiration which regarded the early narratives of Genesis as history in favor of one which finds in them the vehicle of profound spiritual truth. We can recognize and use the teaching of the first chapters of Genesis that all things that exist are due to the creative power of God, without feeling bound to take the pictorial setting of the story as history and thereby raise questions as to the divergence of science and religion. We can disentangle the spiritual message of the prophet from the local circumstances that determined its form, and we can do this with the greater readiness if we bear in mind constantly why it is that we are at all trying to understand the Bible.

The Bible is a book of various meanings and uses. There is a dogmatic use of it. The sixth Article of Religion admirably says, "Holy Scripture containeth all things necessary to salvation: so that whatsoever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man, that it should be believed as an article of the Faith, or be thought requisite or necessary to salvation." All we need to remember about this statement is that that which does the reading therein and the proving thereby is not the individual Christian but the Church of God, which another article declares to be the witness and keeper of Holy Writ. The individual does not deduce his religion from the Bible, he receives it from the Church, and this is in fact no less true of Protestants than of Catholics. Both alike and of necessity are taught their religion in the first instance by the community in which they are members. The divergence comes when

the adult undertakes independently to verify the teaching he has received. As Catholics then we have to ask in matters of dogma what the Church deduces from the Bible and tradition, but that does not justify us in laying away the Bible on the shelf as no longer of any use. The whole individual use of the Bible remains. It is used, that is, as a spiritual guide, as a source of spiritual energy. We can put it in this way, that the personal use of the Bible is not to teach dogmatic religion, but to stimulate personal religion.

We study the formulæ of any science and seem to ourselves to have grasped their meaning, but we are not quite sure that we understand "how they work" till we see them in operation. The student is required not only to master a textbook of chemistry but to go into the laboratory and repeat the experiments which are embodied in the formulæ. No one could get a license as an air pilot, or a chauffeur on the basis of book knowledge. He must show that he can handle the machine. Still less can anyone be regarded as a convinced Christian on the basis of his knowledge of theology. He must have learned the practice of the Christian life. The Christian life, like any other life, is learned by living, but the process of living is vastly aided by the study of how other people live, and here we reach one of the greatest values of the Bible for the individual. The Bible is a book of spiritual experience. It is a case-book of the spiritual life. I fancy that there are very few spiritual cases which cannot be studied in its pages, and for the purposes of devotional study it is a small matter just how they are presented, whether in the way of old folk-tales which have been worked over and re-cast by spiritual experts for the purpose of bringing out spiritual lessons, or

whether they are selected narratives of a nation's history. We can learn equally well from the story of the Tower of Babel and from the history of Absalom. In either case what it is important for us to do is to catch the point of the teaching which determined the inclusion of the story in the Bible and entitled it to be called inspired.

It is especially in regard to the Old Testament that we need to revise our method of approach. We have to get it very clear to us that our business with it is the study of religious experience. The record of God's dealings with man is also of necessity a record of man's dealings with God. When we have ceased to look in the Old Testament for science and general information, and have come to look for spiritual truth, we shall once more find the Old Testament an illuminating book. The early ages of the Church found it of great use because they were able to see in it profound spiritual meanings clothed in symbolism and allegory. The modern world dried it up by trying to find in it an anticipation of modern knowledge. We shall open its treasures once more when we go back to some version of the ancient use. Read as an interpretation of spiritual fact there is no more penetrating story than the Genesis story of man's creation and fall. Read as passages illustrative of the guiding and working of Providence in human history, the whole story of the Kings of Israel and Judea springs into life. There is hardly a page of the Prophets, or a line of the Psalms, which does not glow with spiritual meaning and vibrate with spiritual energy. We are losing an immense treasure by permitting our aproach to it to be blocked by critical questions which have no bearing at all on its permanent and present value. What we greatly need at present is some new constructive treatment of the Old

Testament which will emphasize its present value as an interpretation of spiritual experience, both national and individual.

And especially should this reconstruction bring out the intimacy of the connection between the Old Testament and the New. Not simply as it has been drawn out in the past, as a connection between prophecy and fulfillment, though I believe that that connection is still to be stressed and has not been negatived by any result of scholarship; but I would have the fact emphasized that there is a vital connection between the two volumes in the persistence and continuity of spiritual experience. From the beginning of the Old Testament story to the coming of our Lord there is an experience of God which grows and unfolds in meaning as time goes on. The elementary experience which is reflected in the patriarchal stories passes into the deeper experience that is visible through the checkered story of the Kings, and so passes on into the spiritual depths of the Prophets. But even this splendor of vision is not the end. The Psalms are a spiritual handbook that we can use freely to-day after so many centuries of Christian experience, and there are passages in the Apocrypha, especially in the books of Wisdom and Ecclesiastes, of unsurpassed splendor and depth of spiritual comprehension.

A study of the spiritual experience of the Old Testament and of the Apocrypha in something like chronological order reveals the fact that the vital link of connection between the old and the new order, between Israel after the flesh and the new Israel after the spirit, was not the continuity of the state, that was but the framework which held together the society in which the purpose of God was working, a shell which perserved the kernel,

but the tradition of spirituality which was handed on and developed by the faithful remnant in Israel. Such faithful devotees of Jehovah naturally make little impression on the student of political and social movements, but under all such movements we feel their presence and their preservative energy. They become vocal now and again in the passages of a prophet or the stanzas of a psalm. Evidently they were the support and comfort of the prophets in the fulfillment of their God-entrusted ministry, but their names are rarely written in history.

That does not matter that their names are unrecorded. They are those who, pleasing to the Lord, "spoke often one to another: and the Lord hearkened and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon his name. And they shall be mine, saith the Lord of Hosts, in the day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them as a man spareth his own son that serveth him." They are all those whose names come to be written "in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world."

We are right in saying, are we not? that they are the vital link between the old and the new. We see them clearly when we close the volume of the Apocrypha, looking forward with eager eyes and burning faith to the advent of the Kingdom of God. After all the centuries of waiting, when hope had died in so many hearts, they are sustained by their utter trust in the promises of God. Other things might fail, the promises could not fail. The kingdom in which they hoped might pass away; the priesthood which should have sustained them might become worldly and corrupt; the very house of David might vanish, but the presence of God remains.

They could not understand how or when the promises should be fulfilled, but they were sure that in God's time they would come to pass. The time shall come, the last days, wherein "the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established on the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow into it." There would a morning break when there should come forth out of Bethlehem Ephratah one that should be the long expected ruler of Israel whose goings forth "have been from old from everlasting," one of whom it had been promised "unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The Mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace."

When we open the volume of the New Testament we find them still waiting with that indomitable patience which only the promises of God can create. These are they who, born in the old order, unite it with the new. They are an inconspicuous group, these faithful in Israel, these righteous men and women waiting for the redemption of their nation. We easily miss their significance, so unobtrusively do they pass through the pages of the holy story. They have all the humility and meekness of those whose lives are hid in God, whose sole devotion is the will of God. Watching—that is the account of them. Believing—that is their essence. They live obscurely about the Temple, attracting little notice, perhaps an occasional smile of pity from Scribe or Pharisee or Priest. But their day of triumph came—the day when Mary and Joseph brought unto the Temple the child Jesus, "to offer a sacrifice according to that which is said in the law of the Lord." And the old

Simeon took the child in his arms and sang *Nunc Dimittis.* That was the day of their triumph. They had watched and waited until the end and could indeed depart in peace.

I think that we need always to be reminding ourselves that God works through men. That His purpose can only be fulfilled when it finds a point of contact, of support, in human life. What we call our waiting for God is in reality God's waiting for us. The Incarnation waited till the fullness of time came and then "God sent for His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem them that were born under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons." The time came and the woman was ready and the purpose of God was fulfilled and His work advanced a further stage.

The use of the Old Testament is to lead us up to this stage and its purposes, and when we open the New Testament we find that its earliest writings are certain Epistles and that a large part of the volume consists of letters written in the course of the first Christian century and later collected and read to the faithful when they assembled for worship. It is from these letters that the Church reads to us day by day at the Holy Eucharist. These letters again, and this is their deep significance, grow out of the experience of the followers of Christ. They are thrown off hot from the hearts of their writers. They reflect their day by day experience of Jesus. They are filled with the touch of Him on the life of His missionaries, who go to their labour in full consciousness that they go not only for Him but with Him. They glow with love and zeal and hope, and to us, after so many centuries, they still bring word of life.

We may take the Epistles then as representing the

earliest stage of Christian experience, inasmuch as it was the stage of the foundation of the Church, and the writers intensely under the influence of the Holy Spirit. It represents a level of understanding, of appreciation, of revelation, that is unique to a degree. Yet their experience is on the lines of all true spiritual experience; is not so removed from our experience as that we are unable to understand it or to learn from it.

Christian experience differs from all previous experience in that it is essentially the experience of the risen Jesus. As we study the writings of S. John we are struck by the fact that his experience of our Lord during the years of the ministry has been illumined by his later experience in such wise that his understanding of our Lord is marvelously grown beyond that of the earlier Gospels. And when we turn to his Epistles we are at once struck by the note of immediate serenity that characterizes them. To take but one point, the constant recurrence of the expression, "We know." The experience of Jesus has reached the point of direct knowledge of Him. It was led up to by the testimony of others, but is ended in utter personal surrender. In other words, S. John has achieved the mystic experience and assumes it in those to whom he is writing. See this influence in his own words, "And hereby we do know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. He that saith, I know Him, and keepeth not His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in Him. But whoso keepeth His word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby we know that we are in Him." "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it does not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is." "We are of

God: he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us. Beloved, let us love one another; for love is of God, and everyone that loveth is born of God and knoweth God." But it is needless to multiply quotations. The whole of S. John's writings testify to the possession of this mystic knowledge.

If we turn to S. Paul the same thing is found more plainly true. S. Paul rarely alludes to our Lord's earthly life but he makes His resurrection the cornerstone and starting-point of his teaching. His own knowledge of Him was derived directly from personal communion with Him; it is grounded in his mystical experience. He has a passionate attachment to our Lord which we could understand in one who had been His follower and disciple, but which is strange if we conceive of S. Paul as having only a historical connection with Him. It becomes plain, however, as we study the Apostle's teaching, and find him resting our true knowledge on the fact of our incorporation in Christ. His characteristic expression, "In Christ," is the key to his own understanding of Christ. It is a knowledge coming no doubt from the testimony of witnesses, but illumined by his own personal experience of the life of union. I am not thinking now of his claim to direct revelation but rather to that understanding of the meaning of Jesus and of the Christian's necessity of gaining a personal experience of Him. Such expressions as "Our conversation is in heaven," "Your life is hid with Christ in God," "If any man be in Christ he is a new creature," are sufficiently indicative of the nature of his relation to our Lord and the source of his knowledge, and with him, as with S. John, this is no mere personal attainment, not the outcome of his official status as an Apostle of Jesus Christ, but the

same experience is assumed to be the easily attained experience of every Christian man and woman.

The study of the Epistles then becomes of importance to us in that they are a manual of the spiritual life. Many hundreds of books on the nature and meaning of the spiritual life and of the methods by which it may be cultivated have been written since these Epistles. Many of them are very wonderful books which the Church can ill spare, but they have not superseded the Epistles as the primary manual and the most penetrating comment on the life and teaching of our Lord. Whatever else the seeker for the way of holiness reads and studies he must read and study these, and read and study them not once or twice but continuously all his life. There is no possibility of exhausting them, no danger that they will become worn or stale. Their depths are inexhaustible because their subject is Incarnate God.

As one result of any prolonged study of S. John and S. Paul we should reach the certainty that the Christian religion is a mystical religion. It has, no doubt, other elements which have to be taken account of. It is both institutional and dogmatic; but when one looks at it from the point of view of one who seeks the way to a knowledge of God and communion with Him it is the mystical element that is important. By mystical religion I mean a religion of which the essence is that it effects a union between the creature and the Creator, of such a nature that the creature may directly know and experience God. In the Christian religion the dogmas, institutions, sacraments, all have this end, that they create and sustain this life of union. Christ became Incarnate that He might bring us to God by the way of incorporation in Himself. And the aim of the instructed Christian is so to develop

this life of union with Christ that in the end he may know even as he is known.

Ruskin says somewhere, "I do not wonder what men suffer, but I do wonder at what they miss." One often thinks of that when one sees people who are in earnest in attempting to lead a truly Christian life missing so much of the help and guidance that is at their very hand. Truly the Scriptures of God are still hid treasure to the mass of even devout Christians. Of ordinary Bible reading one may have a very poor opinion, but it remains true that here in this book which the Church hands us for our learning is the one competent manual of the spiritual life. It would not in any degree depreciate the marvelous devotional literature of the Church. It is an indispensable help to spiritual wisdom, but this wisdom is a derived wisdom and we would do well to study it, not as a substitute for, but as a comment on, the revelation of God in the Scriptures. We treat the Bible too much as a record of the past, a past which however interesting and important is still the past, and remote in most respects from us. But the chief function of the Scriptures is not to record the past but to influence the present; or it records the past as a means of influencing the present. The appeal of Scriptures is a present appeal, an appeal to the hearts and souls of men in every generation. It puts before them noble deeds and inspired thoughts to stimulate them to make history, not simply to consider it. We lose the chief purpose of the Scriptures unless we feel them to contain a present appeal to action, unless we find in them a stimulus to love.

If we are to study to any purpose we must ourselves try to acquire the "mind of the Spirit," to accustom ourselves to regard life as a set of spiritual interests where-

through we are developing a spiritual character. We overstress the importance of the immediate and the obvious. The front page of the daily paper seems to us to concentrate the interests of life that it is of immediate importance for us to consider, but these are passing interests. Even to-morrow the front page will present a different appearance. There is nothing like the front page of the paper to teach the lesson that the things that are seen are temporal, whatever it may teach about the eternal things. After all, the eight-hour day, and the high cost of living, and the vital issues of the political campaign, are passing interests. A century hence historians will dig them up from dusty receptacles and serve them up to classes of bored students. But the spiritual interests are permanent. The Real Presence of our Lord in the Sacrament of the Altar is a vital interest in all times and we cannot conceive of a generation to which its interest will be simply archæological. The action of the Holy Spirit on souls will always be central to men who conceive of themselves as immortal.

These are the interests of the Epistles of the New Testament and we turn back to them to study them because there we find the Spirit acting not only as a revealer but as an interpreter. The only man who can speak with authority in spiritual matters is the spiritual genius. It is through insight, given through our spirituality, that we understand the natural world, man, the Scriptures. It is man's contact with the Spirit that gives him his perception of spiritual values, and enables him to speak with spiritual authority. Those who attempt to interpret religion, while denying religious truth, are like a deaf man setting himself to interpret a symphony. All he hears is an occasional drum beat or blare of the

bass. We turn to the Apostles because we find in them spiritual genius, a developed knowledge of the word of God on which they have acted and which they can interpret to us.

THE NINTH MEDITATION

THE GOSPEL

The *Gospel*, being the very words of our Lord, comes last of the lessons from the Bible, in place of honor, and its reading is prefaced by prayers and ceremonies showing its importance. The missal is carried to the north end of the altar. The celebrant bows low at the center and says a prayer asking God to make him worthy to recite His holy words, and to bless him. Then he goes to the missal, greets the people with "The Lord be with you," and signs with the cross the beginning of the Gospel for the day and his own eyes, lips and breast, and proceeds to read. At high Mass the Gospel is read by the Deacon, it being fitting that the highest of the assistants should perform the highest office after that of actually consecrating, and there is a formal procession with cross, lights and incense. In the early days, when every Mass was a high Mass and the Bible lessons always read by assistant ministers, it was the custom to read them from ambos or pulpits. As they were read to the people the reader faced the congregation. Then came the development of low Mass, where everything is done by the one minister, and the awkwardness of turning and holding a large book naturally resulted in the reading being done from the book lying on the altar. However, even at low Mass, the book is placed diagonally for the Gospel, and the celebrant stands as nearly as possible facing the people. The custom of preaching a sermon at some point in the Mass, especially on Sundays, dates back to apostolic times. Normally the sermon was a commentary on the words of the Gospel, and so, quite naturally, it followed the reading of the Gospel. The Creed, when it was finally introduced into the Mass, was regarded as an expansion of the Gospel, and so the sermon often followed the Creed,—as we have it directed in our Prayer Book.

Let us listen to the Word of God:

And, behold, there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon; and the same man was just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel.

Let us picture:

THE life of Simeon. It was passed, we gather, for the most part, in the Temple of God. For years he had been praying there, in patient hope. His soul was nourished by the promises of God—the promises made unto the Fathers. They were to him the surest things in all the world, and he waited patiently for their fulfilment. Others like himself, he knew, had been waiting through the centuries, and the fulfilment did not come; but God could not fail, and so hope did not fail. We can imagine the conversations that went on in the precincts of the Temple between Simeon and Anna and others like them, conversations filled with the hope and joy of believing. We think of them pouring over the promises, trying to gain some new insight into them. One and another of the just and devout died without seeing the fulfilment; but the others hoped on, and filled the long days with their prayers. Then there came a day when to Simeon the light broke: "It was revealed to him by the Holy Ghost that he should not see death, before he had seen the Lord's Christ." What a wonderful day that was; we think of him "going softly" after that with a new joy hidden deep in his heart. Others had

waited in the same faith as he—and had died waiting; but he was to see. That was God's great gift to him. And then one day the Temple doors opened, and a Maiden-mother came in bearing a Child. Picture Simeon holding Incarnate God in his arms, and singing, "Mine eyes have seen thy Salvation.

Consider, first,

How large a part hope plays in our lives. It is the sustaining virtue. How much of the energy that we put into living is called out by our hopes. That power to go on from day to day under discouraging conditions, to face anew a task in which we have repeatedly failed, to endure the sense of one's own shortcomings and one's incompetence in dealing with the problems that fall to one—that is the power of hope. How well chosen is the symbol of hope—the anchor, that which may be relied on to hold us when the storms of life have shattered all else, to hold us so that we may ride out all storms. But it must be an anchor "within the veil," which has laid fast to the promises of God. These old saints that passed their lives within the House of God, to them hope had become almost vision; the veil might break at any moment, as it did to Simeon, and they see the reality. Indeed it is in the House of God that the clouds of our perplexities most often break; it is at the side of the Altar, as we offer the incense of our prayers, that the angel appears. Hopes that are founded on the promises of God unfold into visions as we meditate there. But our hope may be so strong that we may dispense with vision, so strong that the promise of God has become to us the vision of a will that can never disappoint us. Consider the serenity of a life that accepts the promises of

God as being sure in their fulfilment; that goes on to build life on them with no shadow of doubt or fear. They are so rich, those promises of God, and so manifold, they so touch all our lives, in all their circumstances, that the life of the Christian ought to respond to them with vivid joy.

Consider, second,

That the Treasure House of God's promises is the Gospel. The Christian's hope has foundations broader and deeper than the hope of a Simeon or an Anna could have. It is still, you say, but the Word of God? Yes: but not the Word spoken by Psalmists and Prophets, but the Incarnate Word, God manifest in the flesh. In the Gospel we are taken into the very heart of God's purpose for us and our eyes are dazzled by the splendor of the promises that are made. All eternity unfolds before us as the field of our action, all the hosts of heaven are displayed as our fellow-workers, Incarnate God himself summons us to His side and calls us His friends. We have felt our souls thrill responsive to that summons, we have been caught up into the full tide of His resurrection life, and are sent forth in the might of His Spirit to the work of His Kingdom. The earnest of our inheritance is the basis for new hopes for the future,—what the power of our endless life may be we can only partially know. Consider how little we have as yet drawn on the power of the Gospel—that we have but touched the fringe of its promises. What power over life the Spirit will have when men finally yield to it, not one here and there, but in consecrated armies, we cannot imagine. But the very thought kindles our hopes, and we seem to see ourselves going out in that power to the conquest of the

world. The promises of the Gospel for this world will only be seen in their fullness when redeemed humanity becomes sanctified humanity, and the Kingdoms of the world become the Kingdoms of God and of his Christ. In the meantime we look into the future with eyes that gleam with hope.

Let us, then, pray,

For the fulfilment of the Gospel in the coming of the Kingdom; let us pray that we may so take our place in the Kingdom now, that we shall delight in its triumph hereafter.

We beseech Thee, Almighty God, let our souls enjoy this their desire, to be enkindled by Thy Spirit; that being filled, as lamps, by the divine gift, we may shine like blazing lights before the presence of Thy Son Christ at His coming; through the same Jesus Christ, our Lord.

The Gospel

The Gospel at Mass is the presentation to us of our Lord's life and teaching and is chosen with reference to the liturgical year. There is a curious lack of logic in the sequence of the variable elements in the Mass. The Gospel is really the presentation of the Scriptural teaching of the day, and the Epistle is chosen from the point of view of a comment on that, while the Collect gathers up the central thought and presents it to God in the form of prayer. But the sequence is the other way about and we have to study the whole to get our thought properly orientated. For example, I am writing this morning in the Octave of the Circumcision, and the Gospel I read at Mass was the account of the circum-

cision in S. Luke's Gospel. The Epistle is S. Paul's exposition of the relation of faith and circumcision, and the Collect prays that we may have the true circumcision of the spirit.

Our Lord is the central Theme of the Gospels. They were written to keep His life and words fresh in the memory of the Church, and we read them to be refreshed and stimulated by the direct contact with Him that is possible through their pages. Such reading and meditation is not like ordinary reading, even devotional reading. We believe that there is something of a sacramental character in the devout study of the life of our Lord. We believe that there is a special grace of the Spirit therein and that He there in one way fulfills our Lord's promise that He should be our guide, and lead us into all the truth.

There is another advantage to be gained from the study of the Gospels which is not gained from the study of the Creed, for instance. There is a vast difference in the ease and clearness with which we grasp an abstract statement of truth and grasp the same truth embodied in life and action put before us in illustration. Christian truth is summed up in the formularies of the Church. We can study it there and gain an adequate understanding of it; but the impression actually made, its driving force and life, is not very great when assimilated in that way. A Creed makes small appeal to the emotions, and we human beings are moved by the emotions. Unless our feelings are stirred we act with slowness and difficulty. No doubt we like to think that we are primarily intellectual, that we are led to action as the result of thought and study; that in fact our conduct is controlled by purely rational motives; but most of that is merely

intellectual pride. Our conduct is only to a small extent rationalized, in so far, that is, as we have subjected the feelings to certain ideals of life, therefore it is that naked statements of truth make small appeal to us compared with the appeal that they make when embodied in action. Our intellectual assent is one thing, our response another.

Herein lies the answer to the often asked question, "Why are there so many professing Christians who do not at all, or in a very limited degree, act as Christians in the ordinary affairs of life?" How many that are like the boy in the parable who say to the Father, "I go, sir," and go not; the thousands of regular attendants at church on Sunday who on Monday, in business or pleasure, show little enough signs of Christian influence in their lives. Are they the mere hypocrites that the world thinks them? Do they recite a creed and prayers in which they have no personal belief but which they think it is in some way advantageous for them to recite, either because of their social position or because of the impression that they want to produce on others? In a very limited sense that is true. A vestryman from a certain parish said to an acquaintance of mine not long ago, "Of course we do not believe any of this, but it is a good thing for most people to go to church. It keeps them in order." But such cases are negligible because of their infrequency. The account of the matter in most cases is that no connection has been established between creed and conduct; that the creed, which is no doubt quite honestly assented to with the mind does not affect the emotions. The man's conduct is controlled by what he feels, by self-interest, by pleasure, by companionship, and unless the rift is very wide indeed between belief

and practise he is able to go on ignoring its existence. The divergence which impresses other people does not impress him because he is used to it.

And therefore it is a problem of vast spiritual moment to produce an energetic contact between belief and action. Sermons try to do this by their emotional appeals. Ceremonial and music try for the same result in their own order. They would rouse to energetic action the sluggish feelings which are commonly brought to the place of God's worship. This appeal to the feelings is not only desirable, it is vital and necessary if we are to have creeds in action controlling life. It is not true that such appeals are illegitimate or sensational in the bad sense. Our whole course in treating men as though their primary motives in action were intellectual has been a terrible psychological blunder. The rationalization of religion to the level of a Unitarian or of an Ethical Culture Lecture Hall only means the substitution for religion of utilitarian ethics. The instinct of the Catholic Church is always right, though the intellectual ground upon which writers try to account for it may in any case be wholly wrong. It is a right reading of human nature to make strong appeals to the emotions. That is not to neglect whatever intellectual element there may be in man, but only to recognize its proper place and proportion. The energetic life of the Church has been largely occupied in the development of music, of art, of ceremonial because it knows that men and women are moved by these things. A history of the Church in action would be a history of a long series of popular devotions. It has been felt, and rightly felt, that the stated, formal services of the Church are not sufficient to satisfy the demands, and the legitimate demands, of our

nature. So the instinctive genius of the race works constantly on the problem, "How make religion interesting?" This is not a concession to the lower elements in our nature, it is a recognition of our nature as it actually is, a recognition that men are not to any great extent moved to action by intellectual appeals, but are moved by emotional appeals. Therefore according to their background of conviction you find, developed to meet the circumstances, revivals or missions, popular vespers or benediction, rallies or rosaries. They are all, however, unconsciously based on the same psychology. "In the view of many of their exponents, emotion was a mere hindrance to the free exercise of Pure Reason, or again, according to some simply a form of confused thought. Such opinions cannot be too emphatically repudiated. The emotional life is certainly not subordinate to that of the intellect in respect to its origin, nor is it to be considered invariably so as regards its validity. It is in feeling that all *values* reside, and the life of feeling has a logic of its own, distinct from the logic of pure reason, and not necessarily inferior to it. Without going so far as to say, with certain modern psychologists, that feeling is invariably the controlling factor in its relation to thought, we must urge that much of the best, and most effective thought is stimulated and sustained by underlying emotional tendencies, and that in many cases, if not in all, the action of feeling upon thought is very much more intense and decisive than that of thought upon feeling." [1]

Therefore, to go back to the Gospel, the naked statement of a Christian truth, as for instance our Lord's power to perform miracles, is one thing, and the read-

[1] Brown, *Psychology and Psychotherapy,* p. 89.

ing of the story of the cure of the paralytic let down through the roof is another thing. We find it necessary for ourselves to supplement and illustrate dogma by reference to the story of our Lord's life, and it is not simply motive power that we are seeking, but vivid understanding. It is quite possible to understand a definition without understanding the thing defined. For example, we may take up a volume of spiritual theology and read a definition of humility. It seems perfectly clear. We understand all the words, and as they are put together they make sense, but do we understand humility? I fancy not. And to learn about humility we look for examples of it. We try to see it in action. The best place to see it in action is the life of our Lord, so we turn there to know what humility actually means, and seeing it in our Lord we may come to love it and to desire it and to try ourselves to produce it. But I do not believe that anyone ever became humble by learning definitions of humility.

We find the whole positive Christian life as it expresses the divine ideal for man illustrated in the life of our Lord. To read the Gospel is to wander through a vast picture gallery where the spiritual life is illustrated. In the hall of some ancient palace you shall see the walls covered with a series of tapestries which recount in pictorial form the history of the ancestors of the present possessor. Imagine what it must be to a child to be brought up in such an atmosphere, to play daily in such a hall; to absorb all unconsciously the family history, not in dry narratives, but in glowing illustration. And we, God's children, can, if we will, wander day by day through the tapestried chambers of the Bible story. We can gaze on one event in our Lord's life after an-

other as the Church indirectly traces the course and meaning of the Christian year, as it presents to us the articles of our creed, or the items of our morals, and gives us appropriate teaching. We can turn to the pictures for stimulus to the imagination and the emotions. We read the dogma of God made man, but we see the angel come unto Mary with his "Hail thou that art highly favored, the Lord is with thee." We are told the meaning of the Nativity, but we listen to the angels singing over the fields, and see the shepherds taking their way to the Child lying in the manger. We listen to the doctrine of the atonement, but we stand in imagination on Calvary and through the gathering darkness see the pale form of the Crucified, and hear the blood drops falling fast upon the ground. Then we understand, as we could not otherwise understand, that God is love, and are ourselves moved to love.

How many have passed through such experiences in their Bible-reading and then, through the growth of worldliness, through absorption in business, through sin, have left the volume of the Gospels lie forgotten and dust-covered, and the pictures that had once filled the imagination, stimulated action, fade into dim memories, roused it may be at times by the hearing of the Gospel read in Church on some rare occasion of attendance? One reads of buildings that once were holy—convents or churches now given over to secular usage, where there still look down from the walls upon the bustle of secular life faded pictures which had once lighted with splendor the refectories where Religious listened to the Word of God as they ate their simple meals; and the chapels which echoed with the chants of the Divine Office or of the Mass. How many souls there are which have become

thus secularized, which once thrilled responsive to the words of the Gospel, and as they read the inspired narrative found an echo in their souls in tones of penitence or praise. Now they hardly raise their eyes from their daily occupation to the wall of memory, where a dim Christ still hangs crucified, or a penitent kneels at the feet of Jesus. Others there are in whom certain early habits linger to which they themselves would find it hard to attach any significance. An occasional bored attendance at church, perhaps an unprepared communion at Easter, because such a communion has become a part of the family routine and it is easier to go on than to break away altogether. I read of a church in Denmark where it was the custom of the members of the congregation on entering to pause and bow towards a certain place on the wall. It was just a whitewashed wall like the rest of the walls of the church, and when asked why they bowed towards that special place they could only say that it was the custom. They and their fathers had always done so. Some curious investigator washed off the whitewash and brought to light a portrait of our Lady. The Reformation had covered it up but the peasants had continued to bow quite unreformed, and their descendants kept up the custom centuries after they had forgotten the reason. Perhaps there are whitewashed Madonnas in our lives waiting to be discovered and cleansed: habits that wait to be rejuvenated and once more filled with life. We need to go back to the Gospel with its vivid pictures of Incarnate God ministering to men, and catch the present significance of that ministry as a ministry still carried on in the Church, which is His Body, carried on for us and awaiting our recognition and response.

What we constantly need for the stimulation of our spiritual life is that our Lord should become real to us, as a person with whom we have the closest and most intimate relations. It is possible for us to put our Lord off to a distance as a character in a drama of the past. We try to look out across the centuries into that fancied world, where Rome ruled over men, and think what the ministry of Christ meant to those men. That is all very good. A "composition of place" is a useful element in our approach to meditation, but it does not do to stop there, for we are not dealing with the character of the past, with an Augustus, or a Pilate or a Caiaphas, but we are dealing with One Who, though dead, is living forevermore; One whose relation to our lives is not that of a recalled memory, but is intimate and vital. We recall our Bible scenes because by them we are aided to understand our own present action. We are dealing with a vivid, living personality, Who to-day is meeting and understanding and solving to-day's problems. It is then that the example of Christ becomes useful, as it throws light on the road we have to follow. The trained mind, I mean spiritually skilled in Gospel meditation, easily transfers the Gospel scene into Twentieth Century life. Some perplexing problem we have been trying to solve becomes clear in the light of our Lord's life and action. We gain understanding, encouragement, hope, as we learn His method of treatment. The question He dealt with may seem utterly dead, but His solution will prove to contain elements of permanent value. "Is it lawful to give tribute unto Cæsar or no?" Cæsar is dead, and his empire passed away, but the world remains, and the Christian has to effect some adjustment between the world and himself. What do we owe the world? Ob-

viously the best we can give it, our full aid for its betterment. We owe it justice, whatever bears its own image and superscription; that much surely; but what belongs to God—no. Or we can aid our understanding of the problem by another of our Lord's sayings. "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." The world in the sense of human society is our neighbor, the object of our love. Or again it is the man fallen among thieves, whom we, as the good Samaritan, rescue and attend as we may. These are just passing glances, hastily caught lights, which nevertheless serve to show us plainly enough the bearing of the Gospel incidents on the life of to-day. The New Testament is no volume to be turned over to be rent in pieces in the controversies of contending critics, but a living book, able now to aid our life, and to fill our souls with joy and gladness.

I do not think that I am speaking only personally, but rather am touching an universal experience when I say that the Gospels of the Christian year come back to us as we grow older loaded with memories of the past. They recall, as we listen, not only scenes in our Lord's life which we have sometimes tried to make vivid to us, but scenes in our own life, or strands in our own experience, which have become clearly interwoven with them. We listen to the Gospel and there comes stealing into the memory voices out of the past, scenes filled with our loves, our devotions, our ideals and our aspirations which, it may be, seemed as distant to us as the Gospel story itself but which in a moment at the sound of the well remembered words flash into present reality. It may be the face of an old priest whom we remember reading the Gospel, that arises before us; or there may come back to us a Sunday when we for the first time took in some

truth which then seemed splendid and glorious to us, but of which the splendor and glory have faded with the passing of years. No, not the splendor and glory of the truth we now see, but of our appreciation of it. In the words of some parable we read the story of our own spiritual decadence and futility, and remember the days of our aspirations. Or it is the face of one loved, who used to kneel with us and receive the Bread of Life which comes back in the words we have talked over together. Truly the Gospel is a book of remembrance filled with the voices of the past. There are Gospels that come freighted with the scent of lilies or crimson of the roses and peonies, heavy with the scent of pine and laurel and wrapped in the odor of incense. One has but to close one's eyes to hear the sound of bells drifting across water in the early dawn, or ringing sharp in the frosty winter morning. There comes the vision of some country church where the rising sun falls and flashes in flakes of blue and gold and crimson on the sanctuary floor, or of some vast and dusky interior, where a half-glimpsed figure of the Crucified broods in mystery over the silence of the dead.

Such thoughts are far from fanciful, far from being the "wandering thoughts" which distract our devotions. Rather they weave themselves into the solemnity of the Mass and make a part of its offering, the deepest and holiest experience of our lives. The sacrifice goes heavenward bearing with it our tears and laughter, laden with the bitter of our penitence and the joy of our thanksgiving. "And here we offer and present unto Thee, O Lord, ourselves, our souls and bodies." Yes, and all failures, and all the accomplishments, all the bitter waste and all the glad triumphs of the years that are

past: the loves of those who are dear to us: the memory of our dead. Yes, that is what we mean by *ourselves* in this wonderful prayer where we are taken into the very offering to God. *Ourselves,* just as we are, just as we have come out of our tangled past, the resultant of all these experiences of the years. *Ourselves,* united now with the offering of the whole Church. *Ourselves,* with "all others who shall be partakers of this Holy Communion." Yes, and especially all others who have been partakers with us, whose names now come back to us. May we all "be filled with Thy grace and heavenly benediction and made one body with Him that He may dwell in us and we in Him."

Is not that really what we mean by meditation on the Gospels, this intertwining of them with our own experiences in such wise that the events we are reviewing become of living significance to us? We take a fact out of the past, and as it were extract its essential meaning and relate that to our own lives. Thus we live in the Gospel and it all becomes very real to us and of constant help in dealing with the questions which arise from day to day. So doing, we find the world of the Gospel a living world, now interpreted to us by our own lives. We have found how to get past the artificial barriers which are raised to our understanding by changes in time and circumstance and language, and to translate the teaching of our Lord into the language of our own time, and to apply his solution of human problems presented to Him to those which are presented in our own experiences.

And then again we reverse the process, and through the study of our own experience as illustrated by the Gospel stories we are able to understand better the experience of our Lord and His followers. Principles are

cleared up by the application of them to life. Other lives, however separated from us by surface peculiarities, turn out to be the same in essential qualities, in fundamental dispositions, and therefore easily understood in the light of our own living. So we get at the secrets of spiritual living and the course of a normal spiritual development is made clear to us. We no longer regard the normal life as one conformed to the contemporary standard of goodness, but as one conformed to a divine ideal, to the ideal of sanctity. The normal person in the Christian Church is not the sinner but the saint. The sinner no doubt is the *usual* person, but I fancy in no sphere is the average the normal. Certainly the standard of life presented by the Gospel is the life of God manifest in the flesh, and we are to "grow up into Him in all things which is the head, even Christ."

Our study of the Gospel must not ignore the history of the Christian Church. There is a method of Gospel study which treats them as practically complete in themselves, and as the rule by which all else is to be understood. There are in the world of nature certain beginnings which can not be understood by themselves, but only in the light of what they become. So the earliest stages of the teaching of the Church can only be completely understood in the light of what it becomes. This is not in any degree to depreciate the Gospels, it is simply a rule of interpretation for us Catholics. To hold, for example, that our Lord's words in the institution of the Holy Communion, "This is my body, this is my blood," are to be understood in the bare symbolical sense is an impossible interpretation in the face of what in fact the Church has understood them to mean. The controversies of the last centuries as to the episcopate

should be determined, not by doubtful interpretations of this or that passage in the New Testament but by the obvious fact that the Church everywhere found itself in the possession of the episcopate as the outcome of the life of the first generation of Christians.

Any other standard of interpretation of the Gospel teaching than the life of the Catholic Church lands us in utter chaos, and to close the notion of inspired guidance of the Church with the teaching of S. John is utterly to deny our Lord's teaching as to the office and work of the Comforter whom He promised to send, and whom He sent, in His name. His mission is to guide the Church into all the truth, and a large measure of that guidance must have been guidance to the understanding of our Lord and of His teaching. And that is in fact just what actually took place. The unfolding life of the Catholic Church was based on our Lord's person and teaching as it was interpreted to the Church by the Holy Spirit, who is our Lord's Vicar within it. In primary matters, that is, in matters of faith and order and morals, we do not turn to be instructed to the latest rationalistic commentary but to the life of the Church itself and its unfolding experience. On the basis of private interpretation of scattered texts of scripture you can prove almost anything you like by careful manipulation of the texts and by leaving out what you do not like. You can present a conception of our Lord and His teaching which may possibly satisfy the modern mind, but is perfectly different from any conception the Catholic Church has ever entertained. It would seem rather obvious that a religion that can be endlessly reconstructed to meet the "best thought" of each generation can be of small use to any generation. Unless the Christ of

the Christian religion is the same yesterday, to-day and forever, unless He is the Christ Who has been from the beginning worshipped in the Church, He can be of small interest to any human being who is in search, not of a theory, but of a Saviour. The only possible authoritative comment on the inspired Gospels is an inspired, Spirit-guided Church.

And the interpretation of the Church is not an intellectual understanding of the meaning of texts and documents, it is the experimental understanding of a Spirit-informed life. The Church has been the Gospel in action. It has put into action our Lord's teaching. It did this even before a line of the Gospel was written. Its life was formed directly on our Lord's person and teaching and the Gospels were written later as an interpretation of that. They are in a real sense the history of the experience of the Church.

Taking a wider outlook, that is, one beyond the purely formal and authoritative decisions of the Church embodied in official documents, there is another sphere of Gospel interpretation which is of great importance to the individual Christian seeking to perfect himself in the spiritual life. When one finds, as one does speedily find, the needed guidance in the interpretation of our Lord's life and teaching and in the method of its individual application, a Catholic Christian turns naturally to the experience of those other members of the Church who have achieved success in the same faith. One turns, that is, to the writings of the great masters of the spiritual life. And how many there are scattered all along the centuries! Their writings, if collected, would form a vast library, which one could entitle the Library of Christian Experience. We begin of course with those writings

which are inspired in a special sense, the writings of the New Testament other than the Gospels. Though some of these were written earlier than the Gospels, they are still a comment on our Lord's teaching. They are all based on that, and as time goes on that experience is formally embodied in the growing experience of the Church.

There is something vastly impressive and stimulating in the contemplation of this ever flowing stream of spiritual understanding which has fertilized the fields of the Church through all the Christian centuries. The result is the growth and perfecting of what we can rightly call the science of the spiritual life, and this science of the spiritual life is exemplified in the lives of all the saints. What the Gospel means, drawn out in great detail and studied in all its bearings, may be read to-day in those books which treat of this science. How this science of spirituality works may be seen in the lives of sanctity which have enriched every century of the Christian era. Holiness is no dim occult process to which a narrow circle of the initiate is admitted. It is the possible possession of all men of good will. It is the Gospel in action in human life.

THE TENTH MEDITATION

THE CREED

All Liturgies now contain a *Creed,* and the one used most is our so-called *Nicene Creed.* However, the Creed is not an integral and necessary part of the Mass, but is a late interpolation. There have been many forms of Creed and of very various authority. No single one ranks as inspired or as a complete statement of the Christian religion. They originated as professions of faith before Baptism and for use in the instruction of converts. When heresies began to flourish the Creed came to be recited in the Mass as a protest. The custom originated in the East and does not appear in the West until the sixth century, in Spain, as a protest against the Arian heresy. From Spain it spread to Gaul. Rome did not insert the Creed in the Mass until the eleventh century. That it is not an essential feature of the Mass is plainly shown by the fact that it is not used at all Masses. The rule for its use is simple. It is said on all Sundays, throughout Eastertide, and on certain feast days as directed in the missal. These days include all the greater feasts and also the anniversaries of *Doctors* of the church. The Prayer Book of the Church of England appears to contemplate the saying of the Creed at every Mass. Our own is more in accord with Catholic tradition, and provides that it may be omitted from Mass if it is said at matins, thus leaving us free to follow Catholic custom in the matter. One often hears the question, "Why do they leave out the Creed at Requiems?" The form of the question shows a misunderstanding. The Creed is never *left out:* on Sundays and the greater festivals it is *inserted,* and on such days it is not customary to celebrate a Requiem Mass.

Let us listen to the words of S. Paul:

I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ.

Let us picture:

S. PAUL before Cæsar's Judgment Seat. What a tremendous contrast there is between these two men. In one is centered all the power and glory that the world can give; supreme over the lives and fortunes of millions of men, surrounded with all the splendor that the world thinks becoming to those who are exalted to be its rulers, nay, worshipped as a God, as the personal incarnation of the very genius of Rome itself in temples scattered over the Empire; he sits in judgment on this man of insignificant appearance, the obscure representative of an obscure sect. And this other, this wandering preacher and missionary, what does he represent? To the eye of the Emperor, a despised race and a religious movement that is unintelligible. But to us, looking back, he represents the redeeming purpose for God for humanity. And although his work for that purpose and his testimony to its power brought upon him the revilings of men and persecution, he gladly suffered these things, and made offering of his life. As they here confront each other, Emperor and Apostle, the cause represented by the Apostle seems already a lost one; but Rome and its majesty are but a memory and the power of the Gospel is stronger to-day than ever in the past. It still holds the promise of the future. To S. Paul it was a constant re-

proach that he had identified himself with a disgraceful movement; he protests more than once that he is not ashamed of the Gospel; rather, to him to confess Jesus and Him crucified was the highest honor.

Consider, first,

How much it cost the first Christians to confess a crucified Master. They forfeited their place in society, their friends, the respect of all who knew them. They seemed to be entering upon a mad course in taking up the religion of one who had failed to make an impression on his contemporaries and had died a failure by a shameful death. The reproach of the Cross was a very real thing; it was to the Jews a stumbling block, to the Greeks foolishness. We get glimpses of the contempt in which the first preachers of the Gospel were held. No man anywhere regarded them or thought twice whether they were being justly treated or not. One does not realise, till one has worked it out with a concordance, how often the word shame occurs in the New Testament—how shameful a thing it was in men's eyes that the Christians should desert the gods of their fathers and the customs of their country, and set themselves in opposition to the law of their state. What courage, what strength of conviction, what steadfastness of purpose was required to enable men to leave all and follow the way of Christ. Consider the Christian missionary approaching the gates of some unvisited city, sure that if anything at all were known there about his religion it would be by the Jews who looked on him as an outcast and traitor and would do all that they could to thwart his mission. See S. Paul preaching, surrounded by a threatening crowd which in a few moments will break into violence, and drag him

to prison or stone him and throw him out of the city. Hear the insults and abuse that are cast upon him. Hear him saying, "I am not ashamed of the Gospel."

Consider, second,

That it costs us nothing to make profession of our religion. Although the world loves it no more than it did in the days of Cæsar, its opposition does not take the form of persecution, at least by violence. Our difficulty of confession comes not from the violence of the world, but from its seductions. The world has discovered that its power consists, not in its threats, but in its offers. It follows the line already marked out by its Prince, and offers its power and its glory to him who will worship. Those who to-day are ashamed of the Gospel, are ashamed of what seems its intellectual poverty, and of the strictness of its demands. The world is very tolerant of us, only it mingles its tolerance with something of contempt, as of those who are not quite abreast the movement of the times and are still clinging to worn-out methods of thought, or are not broad-minded enough to take all that they can get out of life, but are restrained by a foolishly scrupulous conscience. The god of this world is a very wise god in the things that apertain to his dominion, and knows that the spectacle of his votaries enjoying themselves to the uttermost with the pleasures of this life is a more powerful temptation than any force that he can wield. We would not like to be ashamed of the Gospel, but we are ashamed of being peculiar, or narrow, or prejudiced, or antiquated. There are a great many ways of being ashamed of the Gospel, and perhaps the worst of them is implied in the attempt to stand well with both worlds and consists in having

the form of godliness without the power thereof. It results in the contempt of both worlds; for you can deceive neither God nor Mammon.

Let us, then, pray,

That we may confess Christ boldly and faithfully. That our light may so shine before men that no one can doubt of its source. That we may so confess Christ that he will confess us before his Father and the Holy Angels.

Almighty and everlasting God, who has enabled Thy saints not only to believe in Thy Son, but also to suffer for His sake; extend Thy divine aid also to our weakness, that as they breathed out their happy souls for the hope of Thine everlasting mercy, we may at least attain it by a sincere confession of Thee; through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

The Creed

It is often alleged against the use of creeds that there is no creed in the New Testament. That is hardly a fair statement. It is no doubt true that the creeds as we have them were of relatively slow development, but both the necessity for them and the elements of them are found in the New Testament. There is all through the New Testament, whether in the teaching of our Lord or of His followers, a primary stress upon the need of faith. Now faith in the New Testament is acceptance of God or of Christ as one to whom our lives can be committed, and whose word is the guide and director of our life. Faith is not a barren intellectual assent to propositions as true, but is an act of self-committal to God, into whose hands we surrender ourselves. "Father

into Thy hands I commend my spirit," is the supreme instance of faith in the Gospel narrative. But an act of faith for its completion requires two terms, the attitude of the man who believes and the revelation of the truth or of the mind of the person to whom he commits himself. That is, the act of faith contains both faith and its object as necessary to its completeness. And this object is what is constantly described in the New Testament (though the meaning is sometimes obscured in our translation) as *the* faith.

This object of the individual's belief, this faith, is obviously already in the New Testament a determined set of truths. We are told of the first disciples that they "continued steadfastly in the Apostles' doctrine"; and that that doctrine contained the statement of definite truths appears from all the apostolic sermons reported in the New Testament. S. Philip in Samaria "preached Christ unto them." As the result of his conference with the Ethiopian eunuch wherein he "preached unto him Jesus," the treasurer of Queen Candace asked for baptism and was met by the condition, "If thou believest with all thy heart thou mayest." The eunuch answered, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God." There the two necessary terms of faith are clearly expressed. S. Paul explaining the nature of the "righteousness which is of faith," says (including again these two terms): "Because if thou shalt confess with thy mouth Jesus as Lord, and shalt believe in thy heart that God hath raised Him from the dead thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." Later, writing to S. Timothy, S. Paul exhorts him, "Hold fast the form of sound words which thou hast heard of me." While it is

true that no formal creed is found in the New Testament, yet the elements of a creed can easily be gathered by bringing together clear statements of fact about God and our Lord, which are scattered throughout its pages.

The necessity of some sort of an elementary creed emerged on the day of Pentecost itself. The Apostles instinctively looked upon themselves as a body to which other human beings were to be added. This is almost the first statement about them. "And the Lord added to the Church daily those who were being saved." The conditions of church membership (as we should say) were defined at once, and were clearly belief in Jesus Christ Who is risen from the dead, and Baptism. The creed as we have it followed in natural sequence from this earliest necessity.

For what is the creed as we have it? It is primarily the unfolding of the statement that Jesus is the Christ. It flows spontaneously from the human necessity of thinking about things in which we are interested. Those who say there ought to be no creeds ought really to say that men ought not to think about their religion, or else (which they most likely would say) that by thinking we arrive at no authoritative conclusions but only at private opinions. But of that later.

In the actual formulation of the creed we can, I think, determine two elements. In the first place there is the presentment of the apostolic experience, and in the second the gradual thinking out of what is involved in that experience by the Church through all the centuries.

The Apostles were confronted from the very day of Pentecost with the necessity of preaching. They had to account for the existence and the continuance of a movement which it would seem should have come to an end

with the death of their Master. They met the demand for explanation with the assertion that their crucified Master was risen from the dead and that they were sent out in His name to gather all men into a community which should perpetuate His teaching, and should, by union with Him, attain salvation. They were compelled, therefore, in the fulfillment of their mission, to make clear first to those, and then to others, what they meant by Jesus Christ. In other words, they had to formulate their experience of Jesus. This process of formulation can be traced through the Acts and Epistles, and results in a series of clear statements about our Lord and His work. The need of systematic statement was involved also in the need of instructing adults for Baptism. Those first baptised were baptised on simple profession of faith in Jesus, but that would soon be felt to be unsatisfactory and material for instruction would be gathered, and, we are justified in assuming, agreed upon. Traces of this are evident in the Gospels.

The second stage of creed development was reached when, after the death of the Apostles, and the first generation of Christian teachers, men went on to think out further what was the meaning of the statements about our Lord which were the basis of instruction in the Church. Here the familiar human fact that men starting from the same premises reached different conclusions produced controversy as to the meaning of the deposit transmitted to them from the Apostles. Disputes and controversies were not slow in arising, and (what at present interests us) compelled the Church to define its teaching on matters which had been held without the need of formal definition having been experienced. From this point of view we may regard creed formation as the

Church's reply to the statements of false or mistaken teachers. In reply to statements that the Christian religion taught thus and so the Church was compelled to reply by formal and explicit definition of the faith. It had to think out the full meaning of its own statements and actions. It had from the very first worshipped Jesus as God, but it took centuries to answer all the questions that could be raised as to the meaning of that act. And the answers, as they were slowly arrived at after much discussion, formed the substance of the Creeds.

When creed formation reached a certain stage the creeds were incorporated into the services of the Church, and became regarded as fixed and unchangeable formulæ. The difficulty of further expansion became great but it was not possible to stop men from raising questions and the process of doctrinal development had to go on.

The results were no longer incorporated in formal creeds but they became a part of the formal and authoritative teaching of the Church. This is a process which necessarily proceeds, because, even if it were desirable, there is no way of compelling men to stop thinking about their religion and its meaning. And when this thinking is important enough, and the conclusions grave enough, the Church has to intervene with her authority and settle disputed questions. These conclusions, though not incorporated in the creed or liturgically used, are a part of the faith of the Church. A determination of the Church does not become binding because it is stated in a certain way, but because in some way the Church states it. Whether, therefore, it be stated in the creed, or is the decree of an Ecumenical Council, or is a conclusion universally accepted by the mind of the Church as expressed through its theologians, doctors, liturgies, and so on, it

still is of a binding character on the individual Christian. We cannot draw some arbitrary line across the history of the Church and say, at this time all authoritative statement of doctrines ceased. That would be to declare that at a certain time the mind of the Church suffered paralysis. We cannot say that at such and such a period the content of the Christian revelation had been sufficiently stated, and no further statement can be looked for or accepted, as that is a thing which we cannot know and is in itself extremely improbable. Only the Church can know its own mind, and only the Church therefore can tell us the meaning and content of revelation, and considering the nature of revelation, it is not at all likely that we shall ever exhaust its content.

This process of thinking out and fuller statement does not imply any change in the meaning of the original deposit, any departure from what has been held from the beginning as to the essence of the faith. "What the Church believes always has been, and is forever certain. More than that, it has always been believed, at least implicitly. It may indeed be that a truth, which, up to a given moment, has remained less perceived in the doctrinal deposit, begins to shine out more and to be better known as the result of a more profound study called out by circumstances, or simply reached in the natural advance and the investigation of an intelligent faith. This is the progress of dogma, not in itself, for it is complete and finished from the establishment of evangelical economy, but in relation to us to whose eyes it appears with greater clearness. Thus it happens that to a period of silence more or less long there succeeds an explicit and formal teaching." [1]

[1] Renaudin, *L'Assumption de la Sainte Vierge,* p. 15.

It is through this process of development and readjustment that the Church meets the new tendencies in thought and the accumulations of new knowledge. In their natural enthusiasm for the new, men attempt to disdain the old, to declare it outworn and unsuited to the present stage of human knowledge, or indeed, to be in contradiction to it, but a true faith is undisturbed by any assertion of its incompatibility with contemporary knowledge. It sets itself patiently to study both the new knowledge and the old faith, being convinced that if the new knowledge actually embodies ascertained truth it must be compatible with the old faith, though the old faith may have to be looked at from an unaccustomed angle to find the point of contact. The Christian religion is not a timid and shrinking religion, afraid of the advances of knowledge. It has had too long an experience for that. It has buried too many people who came to weep or exult over its grave. Its slowness to accept the last biological or geological theory is abundantly justified. The world sorely needs precisely such a conservative force to defend it from being victimized by enthusiastic theorists. If a theory be true it does not injure it to have to wait and run the gauntlet of criticism before it be accepted. From that point of view the Church has always given valuable service to humanity. Occasionally truths may have had to wait for a while for acceptance, but never have in the end been defeated. "The faith that seeks to understand what it believes *Fides Quærens Intellectum,* without ever ceasing to have its eyes invariably fixed on revealed truth, does not fear to appeal to the light of scientific reason, and to throw its rays on the object of its belief in order to illumine its sense and bearing." [1]

[1] Terrien, *La Grace et la Gloire,* I., XV.

The whole tendency of the present time is towards the repudiation of authority. We are fast drifting into the state of anarchy which overwhelmed Israel in the time of the Judges. "At that time there was no king in Israel but every man did what was right in his own eyes." It is in no wise astonishing that one of the first claims to authority to be repudiated is the claim of the Church. It has of course been repudiated on the ground of a purer and more spiritual view of life or else on the ground of a return to the teaching of our Lord. "There are no creeds in the New Testament," it is piously said. We have already indicated in what sense this is true. The saying itself represents the same grade of intellectuality as that of a man who should say, "There is no science in nature." Science is ordered knowledge of the world, is our arrangement of facts for the purpose of better understanding and use. The facts are all there. The arrangement only is ours. So the facts of the faith are all in the Bible; the arrangement of them for purposes of use is the Christian Church's. As well plead, "Back to nature and a simple approach to the world without the intervention of classification and hypothesis and all the complexities of modern science," as to cry, "Back to the Scriptures in their simplicity and away with creeds."

If the Catholic Church be right in its belief that it is the custodian of a divine revelation it must be an authoritative custodian. Unless it can declare what it is that has been revealed to it the revelation itself is useless. Any theory of private interpretation breaks down before the fact that it reduces religion to a purely private affair. Religion is no longer what God thinks, but what I think, and my next-door neighbor's religion is what he thinks.

Now what I think, and what my neighbor thinks, is of small importance in these matters. If I can not get at the mind of God I can get at no religion in any useful sense of the word. Religion is not a philosophy, or a conventional code of conduct, that I accept because it suits me to do so. On that ground the Church becomes a voluntary society of people who have reached a temporary agreement on certain matters. The ultimate choice has to be between individual anarchism and the Catholic theory of an authoritative Church.

The analogy between faith and science is very close. "A science, according to general conception, consists in a systematised ensemble of knowledge of facts, which are clearly defined, yet all so closely related as to form a veritable system in which each supports and explains the other in logical sequence: as, for example, in mathematics. . . . Science thus understood acquires a dogmatic authority. It is opposed absolutely not only to ignorance but also to more or less probable opinion or belief. When once established it becomes as immutable as truth itself. It is transmitted through teaching, and the disciple or pupil can but accept it directly from the hands of those who have received and treasured it." [1] This hardly requires any change as the description of the sacred science of which the Church is the authorized teacher. Ultimately of course the authority is the same,—the authority of the truth. The Church no more than science *creates* truth. It only ascertains and states it. The chief difference is that science is an abstraction. The Church has actual existence.

[1] Boirac, *The Psychology of the Future,* p. 1. Boirac rejects this description as more than ideal, and looks on science as approximating this ideal.

The recognition and acceptance of these facts is not to forfeit one's liberty but to achieve it. Liberty is not achieved by the attainment of what we *want* but of what is necessary for our perfect development. Intellectual liberty does not consist in thinking what you please but in ability to pursue the truth. If the contention of the Catholic Christian is true that truth is the possession of the Church of the living God and that it alone can impart to us truths that are necessary for our salvation, to revolt from the Church is to lose spiritual truth and certainty. "To seek freedom not to belong to the human organism of the divine life, to exclude oneself by the bonds of nature and self-will from participation in the life of God, from union with His unlimited action, and in that divine life from union with all human souls who are thus united with God, is a self-stultifying endeavor, a deliberate self-bondage. Thus in the mystical body of Christ, and there alone, liberty and obedience to authority are seen to be identical, two aspects of one indivisible life. If the visible Church were the perfect and adequate earthly embodiment of the invisible, wholly actuated by the Spirit, in perfect union with Christ, its Head, this simple identification would hold good here also, and there would be no need for any division of spheres between authority and private judgment. Since, however, the visible Church is composed of souls not yet in perfect harmony with the working of the divine Spirit by reason of human ignorance, the identification between liberty and obedience to authority can only be partial. In so far as the Church rules and teaches by divine authority, the identification is complete even for the visible Church. Thus to submit private judgment to a *de fide* dogma is to liberate

cognition from the limits of natural ignorance by a participation in the divine truth, and to obey the moral law of the Church is to free the volition from human limitations by the reception of the divine love. On the other hand the less certainty there is that any doctrine or moral teaching possesses divine authority, the more doubtful becomes this identification of freedom and obedience and the greater therefore the need of individual choice." [1]

The formal statements of the Catholic Church then, however made, whether through creeds or councils, through liturgies or through general consent of theologians, doctors or saints, constitute the object of our belief. When we say we believe, the Christian religion it is what we mean that we believe. Our contribution is the act whereby we accept the faith. This act is not a passive act of intellectual adherence but a positive act of self-committal. The ultimate object of faith is not a formula, but God; and to believe in God is self-surrender to the will of God. There is an element of love in such an act. The faith wherewith we believe is faith working by love.

There is constantly being raised a false antithesis between faith and reason. These are set over against one another as though they were in necessary opposition, and especially as though the way of reason were a superior way of arriving at the truth, or indeed the sole way. "I cannot believe what I cannot understand," is still a frequent saying in uneducated circles; but to-day there is a false reaction from rationalism, especially among psychologists. This reaction is no doubt far too extreme in the other direction, after the manner of reactions. A

[1] Watkin, in *God and the Supernatural.* Edited by Fr. Cuthbert.

recent writer says, "The obsession of logic lies at the root of much misunderstanling of human character. We try to explain action by reference to logical motives; and we fail, because the motives are very commonly not logical, and are in fact more powerful than any which logic is capable of producing. If we wish to understand human character, the first and foremost proposition we have to grasp is that motives do not spring from intelect but from a feeling: that the world of human life is governed, not by reason, but by passion, emotion, and sentiment." [1] I would not care to go so far as that. The reason certainly plays a very important part in human conduct, but it is just as well to be clear that it is not the overwhelming important part the rationalists have assigned to it in contrast with faith.

That faith is not demonstration does not mean that its conclusions have a lower degree of certainty, or no certainty at all, but that the certainties of faith are arrived at by a different road than the certainties of, say, mathematics. Divine faith rests ultimately on the word of God and immediately upon the testimony of the Church as to what that word is and means. Reason never completely commits itself. It always supposes the possibility of further evidence, and therefore systems built wholly on reason are constantly changing. They never are in the possession of the entire truth about anything, and have to be revised whenever new truth emerges. We have in our own time seen the scientific theory of matter undergo radical revision, but the truths of faith are absolute and subject to no revision. The truths of the Trinity and of the divinity of our Lord can undergo no change. Our answer to those who would

[1] Elliot, *Human Character,* p. 2.

change them in the supposed interests of modern thought is that to change them is to abandon the Christian religion.

The truths that the Church holds and teaches about God are of such a nature that they can only be known, if known at all, by revelation. If they are not revealed truths then there is no question of them at all. The only ground for belief in the Trinity is that it is revealed. That, too, is the only ground for belief in God's will for our salvation and sanctification. When a man says that such things are incredible, that he cannot believe them, what really happens is that his imagination has gone bankrupt. He cannot get any presentment of the fact before his mind. That may very well be, and yet the facts hold true. Such failure of the imagination does not prevent us from the acceptance of the astonishing facts placed before us in a scientific manual. I am quite unable to understand or to imagine the mode of the transmission of hereditary characters from parent to child, yet I do not dream of denying the fact on that ground. Why then should one deny the doctrine of the Trinity, or of the Atonement, or of the Real Presence?

And then too we have to remember the moral quality of faith. Assent to demonstration has no moral quality. We have to assent. But there is no compulsion about faith. When we accept a certain fact or doctrine as revealed, as representing the mind of God, it requires an act of self-committal to God, requires that we act on something different from demonstration. The evidence is never compulsive; it leaves room for, and requires, an act of free choice. "The evidence seems to me quite as good as it is desirable that it should be. If the evidence

were complete and cogent, faith would become dependent upon intellectual proof and intellectual comprehension of the proof. It would then lose a great deal of its spiritual quality and value. To believe that Christ is a revelation of God and wish that He were not, is a condition about as far from discipleship as anything that can well be imagined. Loyalty of heart is more important in the spiritual world than correct opinions, though no doubt it is true that correct opinions may foster loyalty of heart. For those who know their need of just such a revelation as this, the evidence is sufficient, for it shows that reason is on the side of the faith that such a man desires to accept." [1] And following reason as far as it will lead he arrives at the Church which takes him by the hand and teaches him what reason could not.

Faith will not be thrust into any man's consciousness ready made. God leads us to it but we have to accept it by a voluntary act. And we have to hold the faith by a series of voluntary acts. The fact that we once attained to faith does not mean that we shall always keep it. Constant use of faith is of necessity, if it is to be retained. That is the explanation of the frequent fact of the loss of faith. Such loss is far less due to intellectual than to moral difficulties or to sheer neglect. The well-taught boy or girl, who later on "loses his faith" had never in reality, in most cases, grasped faith as a living force in life. They had vaguely consented to what they had been taught, they had followed certain practices of the Christian life, but they had assimilated nothing. The Christian religion never passed from the state of theory and languid assent to the state of vital experience. We can hardly say that

[1] Temple, *Men's Creatrix*, p. 296.

we possess religion unless we are possessed by it. We are always in danger of losing it unless it has become to us a thing which we cannot do without.

> You doubt if there be any God?
> Doubt is the torpid man's complaint:
> Still hibernating 'neath your clod,
> Your sins and virtues grow too faint.
> But come where life is all ablow:
> Be a murderer or a saint,
> And you will know.

The intensity of our experience is only a measure of the reality of our faith. "What will it do for us?" is the practical question. Will it send us out as emissaries of the Kingdom of God? Will it inspire us with zeal and enthusiasm in His cause? Will it sustain us in moments of doubt or temptation? Can we always see God behind the events of life, offering Himself to us through them? A vivid faith grasps God as always present and always active, and finds in the consciousness of His presence its stay and its joy. On the other hand a failing faith frets under the thought of the omnipresence of God and tries to escape from the pressure of the thought of Him. A man breathes with relief when he thinks he has escaped from the "shackles of religion" to the free air of "liberal thought." But does he ever escape in fact? Does faith ever die?

> She set a rose to blossom in her hair,
> The day faith died.
> Now glad, she said, and free at last I go,
> And life is wide.
> But through long nights she stared into the dark,
> And knew she lied.

THE ELEVENTH MEDITATION

THE OFFERTORY

With the *Offertory* the "Mass of the Faithful" begins. What has gone before is known as the "Mass of the Catechumens" (that is, converts under instruction and not yet baptized). In primitive times the Catechumens were not allowed to remain in church beyond this point in the Mass. They were considered as not yet fit to be present at the solemn acts of consecration and communion. For that one must be of the body of the "Faithful,"—*fideles,* that is, believers, baptized communicant Christians. The spectacle, common in a certain type of parish, of a large part of the congregation departing at about this point in the service is of some interest, as an unconscious revival of a primitive practice, and also as a most edifying exhibition of humility in those who thus voluntarily relegate themselves to the class of the Catechumenate.

In the Roman Mass the celebrant here says, "The Lord be with you. . . . Let us pray." This is a relic of the "Prayers of the Faithful," when the congregation was asked to join in intercessions for various needs. We still have the custom occasionally in the "Bidding Prayers" and in the announcement by the celebrant of the intention for which the Holy Sacrifice is being offered.

The collection of alms takes the place of the old offering in kind of the actual bread and wine to be used at that Mass, which, with the enormous increase in the number of communicants, came to be a lengthy and disorderly business. But the collection is *not* strictly speaking the *Offertory.* The *Offertory* is the formal blessing and offering to God, by the celebrant, of the bread and wine. It includes the blessing and that which is blessed. The East still uses common, leavened bread, as the West did for some centuries. The change to unleavened bread was due to the desire more exactly to follow the actions of our Lord, who of course used unleavened bread at the Paschal supper. After the *Offertory* the celebrant washes his fingers (the *Lavabo,* from the first word of the Psalm he recites meanwhile), a symbolic ceremony now, but a practical one in the days when he had actually to handle and divide the offerings in kind presented.

Let us listen to the Word of God:

A body hast thou prepared me.

Let us picture:

ABRAHAM, at the altar, about to offer Isaac. With what absorbed interest we follow the narrative of this journey from Beersheba to the mountain in the land of Moriah. Very simply the story is told; but from the moment that, leaving his servants, Abraham and Isaac go on alone a tragic intensity is felt under the words. Very stern, very set in its agony, is the face of the father, but more heart-breaking is the unsuspecting wonder of the boy. Nowhere in all history do we find a scene more moving than this. *And Isaac spake unto Abraham his father, and said, My father: and he said, Here am I, my son. And he said, Behold the fire and the wood: but where is the lamb for a burnt offering? And Abraham said, My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering; so they went both of them together.* Try and see that last scene at the altar as the sacrifice is being offered. *And Abraham built an altar there, and laid the wood in order, and bound Isaac his son, and laid him on the altar upon the wood.* Try to enter into the feelings of this man, so subjected to a supreme test. What gives him strength to go on is, I have no doubt, a feeling, mostly subconscious, it may be, that the act he is directed to perform *is* a test. It is God who is calling him to act, and he can act because of his perfect faith in God. This boy had been

miraculously sent to him by God, and he had God's promise, *In Isaac shall thy seed be called.* That promise, he knows, stands. So he accounts that *God is able to raise him up, even from the dead.* I think that that was the reason that Abraham was able to go on—he saw the promise before him all through his trial. He was not surprised when the angelic voice bade him not consummate the sacrifice, and *he received his son from the dead in a figure.*

Consider, first,

All Abraham's life had been an exhibition of obedience. That is why God could propose this final test to him. The law is, *God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye may be able to bear it.* But it is also true that he often suffers us to be tempted to the limit of our endurance. The stupendous nature of Abraham's trial is the reflection of Abraham's power of sacrifice. Is it not weak characters that escape temptation rather than strong—escape because of their very weakness? But Abraham was able to bear the supreme test of surrendering to God that which he most loved. You remember that this is not the first time he had been tried in this searching manner; there had been an earlier test when he had been called on to surrender Ishmael, and the supplicating cry that vocalised his clinging to Ishmael still interprets his anguish to us: *O that Ishmael might live before thee.* But he was then found equal to the sacrifice as he is found equal now. But now there is no cry, no pleading with God who asks his son; only, one imagines, a grey, drawn face bending over a bound boy as he lies upon the altar. *In Isaac shall thy seed*

be called, is his only stay now; but it is an all-sufficient stay. *The promise of God standeth sure,* as it always does. The offering is answered by the grace, and he received his son back from the dead *in a figure.* Perfect faith is ready with whatever sacrifice God asks; perfect faith judges itself by its readiness to sacrifice. *All things come of thee, O Lord, and of thine own have we given thee.* The life which has become habitually obedient to God's will keeps itself in the posture of sacrifice, conscious that only the usufruct of life is its own, and that opportunity may serve it at any moment to render back to God the things of God with a heart, not saddened by their loss, but grateful for their lending.

Consider, second,

What is our own attitude toward God in the matter of offering, of sacrifice? Is it that of one who holds himself ready to meet all the demands of God? Or does it go beyond that and become the attitude of one who seeks opportunity of sacrifice? That is the characteristic Christian attitude: it does not wait for God to ask but seeks opportunity of self-oblation. The attitude of being willing to do a thing and that of being eager to do a thing differ greatly. The one submits, the other seeks; the one surrenders, the other offers. Unless we have the latter quality we are imperfectly Christian. The Christian Church does, indeed, make demands on life, but it is well for us if those demands are anticipated by our sacrifice. It is well for us if we are constantly offering to God the sacrifice which He does not ask us to consummate. So long as there abides in us a haunting fear that God *may* at any mo-

ment make demands on us that we shall be unwilling to answer, so long is love imperfect and fear not cast out. And consider, that God fosters this attitude in us not because of His need of anything that we have but because of His *need of us.* He desires that our love of Him and obedience to His will shall so swallow up all else that we may be utterly His. The surrender of the external thing is but the symbol of our self-oblation which is the true sacrifice we make. The child whom Abraham laid bound upon the altar was the symbol of his choice of God above all else: and the child we lay in the earth, with the pain which is always the close attendant of great love, but in gratitude for the great joy we have had in its brief life, and the joy we, in the future expect to have in it for all eternity, is also the symbol of a faith which accepts God's will as the revelation of its highest good. This is the supreme surrender, the surrender of our dearest to the Father's love. But all oblation partakes of the same nature of self-giving, and is right for God to ask because it is blessed for us to make. The hands which we lift up in supplication about God's altar, may not be empty hands: they must offer to God all that we have, all that we are.

Let us, then, pray,

For such love toward God as shall make us ready to offer back to Him all that He has given us. Pray for the spirit of willing self-oblation.

Lord, here we are; do with us as seemeth best in Thine own eyes; only give us, we pray Thee, a penitent and patient spirit to accept Thee. Lord, make our service acceptable to Thee while we live, and our souls ready for Thee when we die; for the sake of Jesus Christ, our Saviour.

The Offertory

The offering of things to God is, I suppose, to be regarded as in some sort the offering of ourselves. The offerer is assumed to be in communion with God and so wholly consecrated to Him. The material object that he brings and offers from time to time is a recognition of his relation to God and the means of his self-presentation. In the Old Testament system of sacrifices the whole value of the sacrifice lay in its representative character and was therefore required to be the produce of human labour. Merely wild things could not be offered. A man offered not what he killed in his hunting but what he raised on his land; not the wild fruits that he gathered but the produce of his labour.

The offertory at the Mass carries on this principle of free offering of that which we have produced and which therefore is really ourselves. Modern circumstances have reduced it to a largely symbolical character, but in the early days of the Church the true character and meaning of the offertory were visible. When members of the Church brought, and themselves offered, the bread and the wine, a part of it was chosen for the elements later in the Mass to be consecrated to be the Body and Blood of Christ; and they also offered their goods for the support of the Church and of the poor folk among the faithful. Present circumstances have reduced this element in offertory to the offering of money, with a portion of which those things which we once offered in kind are now purchased. But it is well for us to bear in mind what spiritually we are doing when we make our offering, not to let the notion of a contribution to the Church displace the notion of a specific dedication of what we

possess to the service of God. It would perhaps help in the understanding of this if in the services of the Church a rigid line of demarcation were drawn between the offertory, properly so called, and what are but collections. In certain parishes the sole ceremonial function of the day which is performed with the sense of dignity and solemnity is the presentation at the altar of a collection at Morning or Evening Prayer. This is popularly known as the Offertory and elaborate ceremonial and musical acts accompany it. It would perhaps be better if the confusion of thought implied were avoided.

The offertory is a part of the Mass, and at present the part of the worshipper in this offertory (aside from his participation in the whole act as a member of the worshipping congregation) is the money contribution he is given the opportunity to make. I think we ought to understand this contribution (for whatever end) as being on a distinctly different basis from our ordinary contributions for the support of the parish and its work. Our act in giving is a part of the action of the Mass itself and joins us in that action. It is the present representation of the original offering of the members of the congregation of the elements of the Eucharist and of their goods for the support of the poor. This remembrance is perpetuated in the solemn presentation on the altar as one element in the offertory. However much or little therefore we can afford to give we should regard giving at this point as obligatory because of its relation to the whole Mass. In emphasizing this element of the offertory and our individual part in it I am not intending to imply that all other giving is of a secular nature. I simply want to distinguish between a solemn liturgical act and the mere gathering of money for pious purposes.

We can regard both actions from the more general standpoint of good works and the self-consecration that is implied therein.

It ought, one would think, to require no argument to convince any, even the most cursory, reader of the New Testament, of the necessity and value of good works, but one recalls how greatly we are still in unnumbered ways dominated by the theology of the Reformation, and probably in no theological field greater than in the theology of good works and merit. Those who reshaped the services and formularies of the Anglican Church at the time of the Reformation did not, to be sure, go as far as the Continental Protestants did. Article XII of the XXXIX Articles is certainly patient of the Catholic interpretation, but unfortunately the formal teaching of the Church and the current teaching of pulpit and theological literature are not always in agreement. Undoubtedly the current teaching of this latter in many cases was quite beyond the formularies, and in no case was the departure from Catholic teaching more striking than in this whole matter of works. The Continental Reformers and their echoes in England not only denied the value of good works, but their very existence. Their doctrine of original sin was such that they taught that all that a man did or could do, considered in itself, was sin and worthy of condemnation. That any work he could do could be pleasing to God and deserve a reward was utterly denied. The break involved in such teaching was not simply a break with the devotional theology of the Church, it was an utter break with the teaching of the New Testament itself. There would seem to be no better illustration of the possibilities of self-deceit and the self-imposed blindness of partisanship and of the danger of private judg-

ment than is given by this sweeping denial of good works and merit.

It is interesting to note in passing that the descendants of those who vigorously denied all merit in good works, or that any work could be really good, but insisted that all works had clinging to them the taint of sin, are to-day reducing religion almost entirely to a series of good works. They are sweeping away creeds as of no obligation and making the program of modern religion to be one of social service. To worship God appears to be more and more a matter of private taste, but to serve the community is the necessary obligation of the Christian. I do not mean that good works are taught as necessary to salvation, or promoting it. I am not at all sure that the notion of salvation has not followed the notion of the necessity of a definite faith, but works are taught as the peculiar occupation of the Christian. What he is actually in the world for is to improve the world.

That man is capable of such actions as please God and obtain from Him a reward is clear on the basis of Holy Scripture. The following are only a few instances of that teaching. The Beatitudes state not only the quality to be sought by those who would be perfect as their Heavenly Father is perfect, but in each case they state a reward, which is peculiar to the Beatitude. "Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven." "Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth." And the summing up of the last Beatitude is, "Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in Heaven." Speaking of the end, our Lord says, "For the Son of Man shall come in the glory of His Father with His angels; and then He shall reward every man according to his works." That the

judgment will be based upon a man's works is almost too obvious to need illustration. "God will render to every man according to his deeds: to those who by patient continuance in well-doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, eternal life." "Now he that planteth and he that watereth are one: and every man shall receive his own reward, according to his own labour." "And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men; knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance; for ye serve the Lord Christ." [1]

The reward is frequently identified with that which the righteous receive on the day of judgment. "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad." "And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works." "And behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be." [2] This is surely very extraordinary teaching, if all a man's works are sin, and only excused from punishment because of the faith that he has in Christ.

This reward of the works of the righteous is commonly represented as a "crown"; so S. Paul represents the race of life as that in which those who run faithfully receive an "incorruptible crown." This crown S. Paul himself looks forward to. "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth

[1] S. Matthew v, 3, 5, 12. S. Matthew xvi, 27. Romans ii, 6, 7. I Corinthians iii, 8. Colossians iii, 23, 24.

[2] II Corinthians v, 10. Revelations xx, 13. Revelations xxii, 12.

there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing." And in the same sense S. James: "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him." And S. John: "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." [1]

A good work is one that is pleasing to God and wins from Him a reward. The word *reward* appears to stir the ire of many well-meaning persons. They are shocked at the thought of anyone working for a reward. We ought to work for the work's sake, for the love of the work, we are told. There is something mean and mercenary in the notion of working for a reward, and to introduce the notion of reward into the Christian religion is to degrade it. That sort of "tall talk" will hardly bear analysis. Suppose we change the objectionable word "reward" to one that in the premises would mean the same thing,—end. Whatever we undertake we undertake for a certain end. It is absurd to say that any one ought or does work for the work's sake. One undertakes a work for the accomplishment of a certain result. A man does not spend years in a laboratory seeking to discover the germ of a certain disease for any other reason than that he hopes to find it. It is the end that interests him, as much as is the crop of corn or potatoes the interest that stimulates the weary drudgery of the farm labourer. The one work is no more disinterested than the other. The quality of the interest is different,

[1] I Corinthians ix, 25. II Timothy iv, 7, 8. S. James i, 12. Revelations ii, 10.

that is all. Any labour at all needs the stimulus of the forward look to the end. The social labour of the philanthropist will surely not be undertaken except he hope to accomplish something, and this end, whatever it may be, is his reward, whether it be the alleviation of human suffering, or the attainment of the beatific vision. "It is a dull business, unworthy of a being made in the image of God, to grind away at work without some noble end to be served: some glowing ideal to be attained." What the Christian aims at in his labour is to express his love of God and to attain His favor. It is on the fact of things that certain conduct pleases God and certain does not, which is only another way of saying that certain works are good and certain are not. And of the good works which spring spontaneously from our nature, and which are inspired by purely natural motives, we may think, not as the reformers of the Sixteenth Century thought, that they are in fact so many sins, but that they are pleasing to God, and do in fact receive from His bountiful goodness a reward which is indeed not merited in the strict sense of the word but because of their quality of pleasing God to bring to the doers of them the Divine bounty. But there are other human works which are meritorious in the strict sense of the word.

As merit is a subject not very well understood it may be well to spend a few moments on it. Merit is defined to be "that property of a good work which entitles the performer to receive a reward from him to whose advantage the work redounds." The relation here between the work and the reward differs from that in the case of the work naturally good cited above. There the reward followed from the good pleasure of God. In this latter case, as just defined, the relation is one of justice.

The reward follows the work from the fact that it has been pledged to it. That does not mean that the work itself is of such a nature that God has to reward it. When we say that the relation is one of justice what we mean is that God has promised under certain circumstances to reward certain works. That is to say, the claim of reward arises purely from the promises of God, and our belief in it is ultimately our belief in the fidelity of God. God, for example, has promised a crown of life to those who persevere unto the end. "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." As we saw, each of the Beatitudes is accompanied by a promise. It is said of some that "they shall walk with me in white: for they are worthy." S. Paul tells his Ephesians that "whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord." The summing up of the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews is, "For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have shewed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister." [1]

To be meritorious, a work must be morally good and must be performed by one in a state of grace and with the assistance of grace, and from supernatural motive. We can express this otherwise by saying that the meritorious work is the work of the child of God done out of love of his Father. Such a conception of a meritorious work removes it from the possibility of human egotism. Because ultimately the work is the work of God Himself. Our Lord Himself states the principle when He says, "As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except

[1] Revelation ii, 10. Revelation iii, 4. Ephesians vi, 8. Hebrews vi, 10.

it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me." And S. Paul works out the problem, "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure." [1]

As to the nature of the reward that is merited, it has been made sufficiently clear I should think in the passages already cited. I will not go over that ground again, but will merely sum up the teaching. The reward that we gain from the bounty of God, which He has pledged to us, is no earthly riches nor material reward. God does not promise material things—riches or prosperity or health or happiness. His promises concern spiritual riches, and what therefore we merit in the way of reward is an increase of grace here and eternal life or heavenly glory hereafter. The life of the spirit is a life of growth, and that growth is conditioned upon our reception and use of grace; upon our remaining in a state of union, or sanctifying grace, and our use of the actual graces which God is continually offering us. As these are the objects of merit it is not likely that those who seek to perform meritorious works will be animated by mercenary motives. It is difficult to picture a person living in a life of union with God seeking by good works the increase of grace and glory "for mercenary motives." I fancy that there is not at present much danger of such abuse of the Catholic conception of the spiritual life.

We try then to envisage the Christian life as a life of devoted service. The Christian is indeed, after an oft-repeated apostolic expression, "the slave of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ." His whole life's energy is owed to his Lord and Master. This is his primary obligation

[1] S. John xv, 4. Philippians ii, 12, 13.

and must color and control all his activities. Technically he may not be concerned in religious work, but the work he is concerned in will be done in a religious spirit, will in fact be a consecrated thing. According to the exhortation of S. Paul, "Whether therefore ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God." Such entire consecration of self assumes that all our works are properly directed and that they fall into the category of good works and are pleasing to God. They are in fact associated with the work of God in His Kingdom. In them we are reaching our ideal and becoming fellow-labourers with Him. "We are labourers together with God" for the upbuilding of His Kingdom. That is in fact our vocation.

What are we set on earth for? Say, to toil,
Nor seek to leave thy tending of the vines,
For all the heat o' the day, till it declines
And death's mild curfew shall from work assoil.
God did anoint thee with His odorous oil
To wrestle, not to reign.

One finds too many members of the Christian Church whose attitude towards the Kingdom of God is that of sponges. Their thought is of what they get. Of any thought of a personal contribution of time, money, energy, they are alarmingly innocent. Their worship consists in attendance at certain services which they enjoy. They never have time to take part in the work of the Church. Their giving is a minimum. They do not believe in Missions. Their chief contribution is the contribution of criticism. We are constantly trying to prove the advance of the Church by statistics of growth furnished by the parochial reports and Church Almanacs.

I am inclined to believe that the Church would be much stronger if its membership could be purged of idlers and hangers-on. No doubt the Church is not a club of saints but a hospital in which sick souls are being cared for; but certainly it ought not to be transformed into a sanitarium for chronic invalids. I do not believe that anything has done more to discourage the work of the Kingdom of God than the teaching that good works in the theological sense are impossible, and that nothing that we can do can forward the process of our santification. That teaching paralyzed activity for long and at present has resulted in putting it upon a wrong basis. Men who are sincere in their love of God and their neighbor will work for them, but taught that such work has no religious value, they have largely shifted its proper basis and rested it upon a theory of philanthropy. That shift, combined with the destructive results of the division of Christendom, has brought it about that the greater part of charitable and educational work has passed out of control of religion altogether and become thoroughly secularized. The supporters of such institutions to-day have a very deep sense of social obligation, and a correspondingly deep distrust of the intervention of religion. As a result it becomes extremely difficult to support schools, colleges and charities of a positive religious character. In the church to which we belong, and of which the membership represents vast wealth, such institutions are starved, or semi-secularized and the wealth flows in abundance to secular institutions.

Surely what is needed is a clearer and deeper understanding of what it means to be the child of God and of, not so much the obligations, as the privileges that flow from that status. The heart of the child of God turns

naturally to the heart of his Father. Between them is the constant interchange of love. The thought of the child is the Father's will, not as a compulsion that must be yielded to, but as an ideal, in the pursuit of which love can be expressed. And it will be in no degree unworthy of the child if he thinks of the love of the Father as seeking him, as gratified in his efforts and as overflowing to him in the spiritual gifts love reaches to bestow.

It is no unworthy conception, but one that we find deeply rooted in the Gospel, that our good works are the means of securing to us an ever-increasing bounty of grace. We, loving God and God's work, devoted to the cause of the Kingdom of God, are eager for our self-enrichment to the end of more profitable service. That is only another way of saying that we want to grow in grace and in the knowledge and love of God.

I suppose that human beings oftentimes do not really believe the theories they profess. If we believed the theory of religion that many of us have been taught, we should find life infinitely depressing. God has been represented as one whose chief interest in humanity is in its sinfulness, and while His love is shown in the proposing of means of forgiveness the human being himself is always and everywhere a sinner, and all that he does in need of pardon. The mercy of God—yes; but it is not the sort of mercy which stimulates life and fills it with joy and gladness. One has nothing to offer God but one's repentance. Surely this makes of religion an affair infinitely depressing and in some sort justifies the frequent criticism that religion is a matter of concern only to the weak and faint-hearted and not to the young and strong.

That is an utterly wrong emphasis. Religion comes

to the young and strong with, if you will, a message of the danger of sin and the need of repentance, but it is far from stopping there. It goes on to call upon them to consecrate their whole strength to the work of God. It calls them to self-offering, to hard daily work in and for the Kingdom of God; and it has no hesitation in telling them that God "is not unrighteous to forget your works and labour of love which ye have showed towards His name"; that it is written of those who seek to have their works seen and appreciated of men that they have their reward here and now, and it is the mind of God that those who work for Him shall receive of Him according to their deeds. "To those who by patient continuance in well-doing seek for glory, and honor, and immortality, eternal life." To teach that sins are always punished and that good works are—well, forgiven, is, to say the least, not a stimulating presentation of the mind of God. It gives one a depressing feeling that one will always be regarded with suspicion, even in another world.

On the other hand, there is enormous stimulating power in the thought of constantly gaining an increase of grace and of future glory. That implies nothing of self-righteousness. There is no notion that what is accomplished is otherwise accomplished than through the use of the grace of God; but there is the conviction that through the use of that readily given grace we are forwarding the work of our Father, and increasing His external glory. Men see our good works and glorify, not us, but our Father which is in Heaven. Ours is the joy of the labourers who go out with singing into the vineyard of the Lord, especially if it be our happy vocation to be called at the spring of the day, to be of those who have escaped the weariness of a wasted life.

When the last dawns are fallen grey,
And all life's toil and ease complete,
They know who work, not they who play,
If rest is sweet.

Great are the waste places of the world after now nearly two thousand years of Christian effort, and some of them are really terrifying wastes, for they are not the still untouched wilderness, the fields awaiting the sowing of the harvests, but the desolate fields of once flourishing Christian communities. I do not see how any Christian can look at North Africa, or the Near East, without a shudder. One raises one's eyes from the past and looks at the spectacle presented by so-called Christian countries, and wonders if it be not written of them too, "remember from whence thou art fallen and repent, and do the first works: or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of its place, except thou repent." There must be a judgment hanging imminent over so ineffective a Christianity, socially considered, as ours—a Christianity which tolerates almost without protest the flagrant social abuses which are the phenomena of its decay. Shall not God judge such a nation as this?

If there still be any way of adjourning that judgment it can only be that we shall repent and do the first works. That we should put first things first in our lives and insist, as far as in us lies, on the recognition of the spiritual foundations of life. There is small use in lamenting over the past, and the only use of criticizing the present is as a basis for present and future action. S. Peter's exhortation rings true for us to-day. "Wherefore gird up the loins of your minds, be sober, and set your hope perfectly on the grace that is to be brought

unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ; as obedient children not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance; but as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of living: because it is written, be ye holy; for I am holy."

THE TWELFTH MEDITATION

THE PRAYER FOR THE CHURCH

The "Prayer for the Church Militant" presents a curious anomaly. The matter of which it is composed belongs properly in the Canon, forming the first part of the long prayer of consecration, and this is its place in the First English Prayer Book. Some of the Prayer Book revision projects have urged a restoration of this order. The proposed revision of our American book leaves its position unchanged but does restore to it the sadly needed commemoration of Blessed Mary and the saints and prayers for the faithful departed.

In the Roman (and of course in the old English) Mass the celebrant, instead of "Let us pray for the whole state of Christ's Church militant" says, "Pray, brethren, that my sacrifice and yours may be acceptable to God the Father almighty," and then reads the prayer called the *Secret*. The Secret is part of the Proper, varying with the day. If more than one collect has been used there will be a corresponding number of Secrets. The name "Secret" is due to the fact that these prayers are said *secretly*, i. e., inaudibly. The custom of saying parts of the Mass inaudibly has a practical origin: to keep the service from inordinate length the celebrant would proceed with his portion without waiting in idleness until the choir had finished what it was singing. In the case of the Secret the choir is singing the Offertory Psalm. That the simultaneous action in sanctuary and choir may be coördinated and dislocation of parts avoided, the celebrant sings out loud the final words of the prayer, "world without end," thus showing choir and people what point he has reached. We have strangely preserved this safe-guard against confusion and chant, "our only Mediator and Advocate," even though we may have said the whole prayer in a loud voice.

This system of simultaneous action by clergy and choir is carried very much further in the Eastern Church, resulting in what amounts to two separate services going on at the same time, with a large part of the Mass inaudible, as well as invisible behind the *iconostasis* or screen.

Let us listen to the words of our Lord:

I pray not that thou shouldst take them out of the world, but that thou shouldst keep them from the evil.

Let us picture to ourselves:

OUR Lord in these last hours before his passion praying for His Apostles and those who should come after them in the Church. They are in the Upper Chamber where they have come to eat the Passover, that Passover which saw symbol translated into reality, and what it had prophesied fulfilled. The Apostles no doubt are filled with the awe of the hours in which the darkness is gathering about them. Slowly the shadows of the great Tragedy are creeping over them and filling their souls with darkness. What the coming hours are to hold is still uncertain, but that they stand at the very edge of some great calamity they must feel. And yet when they raise their eyes and look upon the face of the Master they may feel something of this doubt dispelled. There is perfect calm in that face. There is perfect serenity without trace of doubt or pain in all that He says. If His words are grave even with an unwonted gravity, yet are they the words of one who sees into the future and goes forth to meet it with untroubled confidence. Above all, they are the words of one who bears them and their future in His very heart. In whatever future unveils itself to Him He sees them and Himself providing for their needs. They are to be in the future He sees and they are to be together—they are still to be His disciples. There is to be some momentary separa-

tion, but He will not leave them orphans. He will come to them. We seem to see them about the table, listening eagerly, breaking in now and again with perplexed questioning, with protest. Peter protests his ability to go on to the end: *I will lay down my life for Thy sake.* Philip rises to a higher level and shows that he has caught a glimpse of the truth: *Lord, show us the Father and it sufficeth* us. Watch the breathless interest with which they follow His words, forgetful for the moment of all else. Then they cease to question and our Lord turns from them to pray to the Father for them: *I pray not that thou shouldst take them out of the world, but that thou shouldst keep them from the evil.* Then silence comes. They arise and go out and pass over the brook Cedron to a place where was a garden. All their lives long the memory of these hours would come back to them to strengthen and hearten them. In the years to come they would live by these words.

Consider, first,

That these words are spoken to us as well as to them. They are the words of the Head of the Church to all the members of His Body, in all ages, under all circumstances. We read them over when our faith grows dim, when our courage fails, when the fabric of the earthly Church seems to reel under the blows from without, or crumble because of some infidelity within. In such hours we retire into the Upper Chamber with our Lord and listen with beating hearts to his prayer to the Father. We hear him saying to us as he said to the Apostles: *Let not your heart be troubled neither be afraid; ye believe in God, believe also in me.* Power still flows out from His words to us as it flowed out from His Sacred Human-

ity to those who touched Him. The same words which prepared the Apostles for His passion, prepare us to rise up from our communing with Him and go out to face the daily work of the Christian life. He has not left us. He is still with us—the Head of the Body. He, Crucified, Risen, Ascended, is restored to us in living Presence. He is with us not only in word, in example, but in the mission of that *other Comforter* whom the Father sends in answer to His prayers. *Abide in me, and I in you,* He says to us; and we learn that the secret of the untroubled life is its fixity in Him. It is not that He stills the fierceness of the storms about us—I pray not that thou shouldst take them out of the world—it is that He stills *us:* let not your *heart* be troubled—and so the evil has no power. The pressure of the evil remains and thereby our inherence in Him is being tested. Can we remain calm amid the evil of life? Can we abide untroubled by its assaults? Can we continue in interior peace—the peace of our union with Him, while we are vexed with all His storms? Surely, in confiding the fortune of His Church to us He expects this of us; He expects that we shall manifest His strength in our lives in His Kingdom, and not by our fear, our discouragement, our little faith, our lack of love, our failure in hope be weakness and an added burden to the Church. Let us learn through intercourse with Him in the Upper Chamber how to go out with Him to His combat with the Powers of Darkness, how to follow Him, aiding Him in the bearing of the Cross.

Consider, second,

That it was our blessed Lord's will to commit the fortunes of His Church—His own fortunes—to men. The

Kingdom of Heaven was not to come by the operation of divine power subjecting men to its rule; it was to come through the operation of the Spirit of Holiness transforming men into the likeness of Christ Jesus. Hence its growth, its success, is always determined by human response: it succeeds or fails as those who are sent are found faithful. Our part in the life of the Church is not chiefly passive or receptive, but active. Our Lord in carrying on His work is not like a father who holds the reins while the child seems to himself to drive: at every moment the fortunes of the Church depend on us. It is permitted us to divide it by our self-will and lack of charity; to lower its spiritual vitality by our sins; to obscure its power of witness by our failure to respond to its ideals, to discredit it in the eyes of men by our frivolity and self-indulgence. We can bring its life to the lowest level, all but destroy it,—that we can never do. Let us think of the nature of our response to this life, manifested through the Church. Is it to us the most wonderful of our privileges that we have been taken into the Body of our Lord and made one with Him? Is it our ever-present desire worthily to manifest the life given us? Have we a deeply grounded conception of our duty to the Church from which all spiritual riches flow out to us? Do we remember that our Lord's last undisturbed hours spent with His Apostles were spent in teaching them the nature of their vocation as members of His Body and in praying that they might be protected and sustained in that vocation: that foreseeing the future of His Church in the world He strove to protect it with a rampart of love and prayer, that its faith fail not? It was indeed —that He saw—to be a Church Militant here on earth: but through His power the gates of hell should not prevail

against it. But this or that soul may fail in the struggle with hell. Have you been found faithful?

Let us, then, pray,

To Him for deeper understanding of the nature of the Church as the Body of Christ. Pray that you may respond to its life and be delivered from the evil that besets you.

O God, who hast promised that Thou wilt never be absent from Thy Church unto the end of the world, and that the gates of hell shall never prevail against the Apostolic confession; graciously make Thy strength perfect in our weakness, and show the efficacy of Thy divine promise, while Thou deignest to be present with Thy feeble ones. For then do we beyond doubt feel Thy presence, when thou dispensest to each one, at all times, in fitting manner, things desirable, and by perpetual protection guardest us from the attack of all our adversaries.

Prayer for the Church Militant

As the drama of the Mass is enacted before us there is now displayed the scene of the Church throughout all the world, in some sense stretching from the moment of creation to the end of time, the thought and purpose of it inter-penetrating and determining the form of all the creative work of God. For we can only conceive of that work as including from the beginning the purpose of the Incarnation, and therefore also the purpose of the Church. The Church is the actual carrying out of the purpose of the Incarnation, is the congregation of all those who are gathered into one in our Blessed Lord.

When therefore at this point in the Mass we pray for

the whole state of Christ's Church Militant we have forgotten for the time all localism and regionalism and are looking out upon the ideal body of Christ, upon His mystical body. There are times when we are compelled to think of its imperfections and its divisions, but this is not such a time. Here and now in thought and purpose we have achieved unity. We are not praying for the Protestant Episcopal Church, or for the Church of England, or for the Eastern or Western Church, except as these are contained in the whole that transcends them. We are praying for that Church which is the body of Christ, the Holy Church throughout all the world, which is trying to manifest here on earth the will and the purpose of God; sadly broken and defaced to-day, displaying the disastrous results of human sin, of envy and jealousy, of pride and covetousness of power, it yet remains the expression, however thwarted, of a divine purpose, of "the eternal purpose which He purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord." Looking out over the awful situation that sin has brought about we still are able to catch the vision of the One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church upholding the ideal of the Incarnate life in the midst of the world. And in the strength of that vision we take courage and fare forward.

And what a stimulating vision it is, that of the Catholic Church! There are a few men gathered about their Master in an upper room in Jerusalem listening to His final words of council. A few days later these same men are gathered in fear in the same room, feeling that the house of their dreams has fallen about them and that nothing remains for them but a violent and bitter death. Then this same room sees recovery and a new born community filled with fervent zeal, glowing with hope,

enthusiastic memories of One who was dead and is alive again. Then how the drama unfolds! The messengers of glad tidings are transforming the whole world with their message. Wherever they go communities of the faithful spring up and themselves become centers of light and life. The good news of Jesus and the Resurrection penetrates everywhere, even to the uttermost isles of the sea. The risen life of Jesus lays hold of the multitudes, and the results are seen in the fires of martyrdom; in the perilous labors of missionaries; in the prayers and discipline of convents; in the unnumbered multitude of simple souls who unnoticed fill the cities and villages of the world. And to our own day the story has gone on, a living history, adding chapter after chapter to the experience of the Incarnation.

It is for this one Church that we who are the Church in this place, the localization of the Catholic Church, come together to pray. Let us try for a moment to understand in greater clearness what that Church really is.

It is in the first place Jesus Christ Himself. He at His Incarnation took that body which was later to be expanded by the addition of new members into the whole Church, whether on earth or elsewhere. The best description of it is the simple description that it is His Body. That is the aspect of it upon which the New Testament writers focus attention. He, Christ, is the Head and He, the Father, "gave Him to be the head over all things to the Church, which is His body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all." There could hardly be a broader commission, or a clearer statement than that. Our relation to this Body, it is often repeated, is that of members. "We are members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones." Nothing is really added when this statement is

elaborated, but its presentation from various angles and in various contexts does add to its impressiveness. "He is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the first-born from the dead; that in all things He might have the preeminence. For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell." This analogy of the spiritual body and the physical body is carefully drawn out with the view to emphasizing our personal relation to our Lord. "Now ye are the body of Christ, and severally members thereof." "For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office: so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another." [1]

What constitutes this union or unity of many into one is the participation in a common life. This is sufficiently indicated in the passages just cited. The sharing of life achieves the unity both of the natural and of the spiritual body. The same fact is indicated in our Lord's parable of the vine and the branches. "Abide in Me and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine, no more can ye, except ye abide in Me." The same truth underlies our Lord's words as to the Holy Communion. "As the living Father hath sent Me, and I live by the Father, so He that eateth Me, even he shall live by me."

The essential unity of the Church therefore is the unity of its life. It exists, and can only exist, by virtue of the inherence of its members in Christ. This inherence is effected and sustained by participation in the sacraments which the Church is commissioned to administer, but the unity which has been effected between the Christian and

[1] Ephesians i, 23. Ephesians v, 30. Colossians i, 18, 19. I Corinthians xii, 27. Romans xii, 4, 5.

Christ, though effected by the agency of the Church, cannot be destroyed, save by the sin of the individual. We should understand, therefore, that the external divisions of the Church, due to human sin and frailty, do not of necessity separate the members of Christ from Him. There is such a thing as the soul of the Church, made up of all those who are at any time in union with Christ, whatever may be their outward affiliations: even when, through no fault of their own, they are associated with bodies which are not parts of the Church. Just as in the Church there are many members whose membership is nominal and external, who are separated from the Head of the Church by their sins while retaining membership in the visible Body, so there are those who, not being in union with the visible Body, are yet, because of their faith and love, in union with the Head. The Church has a visible organization: is made up of many communities scattered through the world and held together in external unity by governmental machinery. The machinery is to-day out of order and the various parts of the Church do not work together. But the Church in its full sense as the Body of Christ is not made of communities but of all those who are in union with Jesus.

We value the visible Church as the body of Christ, through which we normally attain union with Christ, but we do not feel that the present disunion of Christendom is fatal to the claims of all but one body to administer valid sacraments, or to preach the Gospel. In other words, however valuable we may esteem external unity (and we can hardly over-stress what is the declared will of our Lord) we must insist that the interruption of that unity is not fatal to the communion of the individual who possesses faith and love with His Redeemer and Head.

No doubt the theory of an invisible Church has been pushed to impossible lengths, but we must not let that make us blind to the fact that there is a valid distinction between belonging to the exterior organization, which is the Church in any place and being united with the soul of the Church. In fact it would seem possible to lay an undue stress upon the fact of external unity. No doubt external unity is our Lord's will, and we should do all we can, make any sacrifice required, to achieve it. But at the same time it is not necessary to lose sight of the fact that unity, like the other marks of the Church, has always been an ideal rather than an achievement. It is hardly possible to put one's finger upon a year in the Church's history when there has not been in existence a division of some sort. Naturally, if we accept the claim that outward communion with the Bishop of Rome is the sole test of Catholicity, the question falls, but in view of the clear facts of the history of the first millennium one can hardly take that position. And in regard to no other note of the Church is perfect accomplishment regarded as the test of Catholicity. As a test of the legitimacy of the Church surely sanctity is of primary importance, yet it has never been held as other than a heretical theory that the Church must be, and can only be, composed of saints in the sense of persons of achieved holiness. The sects which from time to time have been founded upon that theory have been repudiated by the mind of the Church. The Church is holy in its constitution as the body of Christ. It is custodian and administrator of the grace which, properly used, will result in sanctity, but never at any time has its membership been wholly of saints. The holiness of the Church remains an ideal to work towards rather than an achieved fact, and

so it is with the unity of the Church. There is a certain inner and vital unity between Christ and His members, but the external unity between the members themselves remains to-day an ideal which beckons us on. And the achievement of that ideal, which all men who love our Lord must passionately desire, can only be hindered and delayed by the proposal of conditions which are inherent neither in the constitution of the Church nor the development of principles under the sanction of the whole body.

But in our thought of the Church Militant we will do well to confine ourselves to the thought of the one Church as it exists in the mind of God and is but partially reflected as yet in the accomplishment of men. The Church is our mother, the object of our devotion and love. It has always cared for us and always will, if we abide faithful. "At our coming into the world the Church receives us in its arms; it takes possession of us. It makes upon us mysterious unctions, pours a little water on our heads, and we are holy. At the hour of our supreme agony it again comes and prints upon our members the seal of salvation; it makes the last unction, blesses us the last time—and we are consecrated for death. It will bless even our dust in the tomb, so that our remains will, even in corruption, preserve a sort of majesty; and God will remember that we have been consecrated for the resurrection of glory."

The prayer we have before us opens with a cry for unity, but recognizes that unity must go along with truth. There can be no enduring union save on the basis of truth. Unity by compromise is of the least possible value, and therefore all modern negotiations for unity are destined to failure. We have been aroused in the last twenty-five years, as probably never before, to an understanding of

certain evils that result from our divisions, and naturally we have seen those evils in terms of a contemporary experience. We live in an industrial social order and therefore we have seen the evils of division as *waste*. The spectacle of the small town with its group of antagonistic and ill-supported churches got on our nerves. The rapid falling off of candidates for the ministry, due to the meager support that could be looked forward to in comparison with the rich rewards that attend ability in lay life, has alarmed us for the future, especially as the decline in numbers seems always to be attended with the decline in the ability of those who offer themselves. These, and similar considerations, have led many to look to union as the solution of a growing economic problem. Others find a prospect of union in the decline of dogma among the Protestant bodies. The wall of creeds and conventions appears to have broken down and with their finishing the possibility of a platform on which a large part of the Christian world can agree seems a possibility.

There is a great deal of force in these considerations if one does not believe in a revelation which has been progressively defined during the history of the Church, and which is binding upon the conscience. I do not at all see why Protestantism should not become a united force and present a unified action to the world. There are tides setting in that direction which seem to gather headway as the years go on. There would appear to be no real obstacle to such a union save the ordinary human obstacles which have always to be encountered, dislike of change, and the selfish opposition of vested interests. Such a Protestant union would be a vast gain in many respects other than economic.

But those who believe in the Catholic religion can not

approach the problem in the same way. They cannot jettison the experience of the Church in favor of a return to some imaginary "simple Gospel" which will afford a convenient platform for unity. They can not sacrifice principal to finance, however that may be in line with the modern mind. While, therefore, a Pan-Protestant union would seem possible and desirable, a Catholic union which would bring together those who, however outwardly separate, regard themselves as members of the Catholic Church and legitimate heirs to its inheritance, is a more difficult matter.

But for my own part I decline to consider it as a hopeless problem. It is a problem that requires much patience and much charity, but it must be soluble, and the signs of the times are not wholly discouraging. What is more needed than anything else is a preliminary discipline looking to the elimination of prejudice. There are inherited party cries that need to be forgotten; ancient quarrels, the very point of which has passed from memory, of which a shade remains to poison and distort our thought. We need to get rid of the assumption that we are masters of all truth and especially can not learn from those from whom we separated. We need to consider one another's peculiarities, not as points of repulsion, but as possibly containing valuable treasure. We need to make all allowances for differences of race, of tradition, of environment, as determining an emphasis which varies from ours. Foolish as it seems, it is in fact prejudice and misunderstanding more than dogmatic differences that keep Catholics apart. I am quite certain that an agreement on what is the faith of the Church presents small difficulty compared with the difficulty growing out of differences of practice. The East and the West seem

to be able to reach an agreement on the meaning of Eucharistic doctrine far easier than they can on the sort of bread that is to be used in the celebration of the Sacrament. I am convinced that there are no vital differences between East and West; even that which seems to-day the insuperable difference, the papal claims, is quite patient of an interpretation which will make them acceptable to other than Roman Catholics.

I stress these things partly because of their importance, and partly because what we are immediately considering is a prayer for the whole state of Christ's Church Militant, and not a prayer exclusively for the Protestant Episcopal Church, and if we are to pray effectively, so all saints instruct us, we must first of all prepare ourselves to pray. If to-day we bring a cause before God we must be clear that we understand what we pray for, as we ought. To approach God with a prayer for a unity that we do not desire, or which we are quite certain can not be obtained because of our imposed conditions, is little less than sacrilege. Prayer reduces to superstition when we have made up our mind and try to impose it upon God. Any one who is vitally interested in unity will be ready to give time to the study of those facts which divide Christians, with a distinct attempt at a sympathetic understanding.

The prayer for the Church puts the essence of this position better than I can hope to do when it bids us pray, "that all those who do confess Thy holy name may agree in the truth of Thy holy word and live in unity and godly love." Truth and love are two indispensable elements. We tend to stress one or the other. We lose sight of love in the bitterness of controversy and so unfit ourselves to even understand our opponents; or we first substitute sentimentalism for love and then sacrifice truth

to it. The way of success would seem to be to approach one another with the desire to understand and with no shadow of an attempt to compromise. That that should indeed be our attitude, and above all, the attitude of our authorities, is indeed a thing to be prayed for in these fateful days. The immediate future will, no doubt, see many well meaning attempts at union of some sort. Let us pray that such will be not only well intentioned, but divinely directed.

We are praying for the Church Militant, and the prayer passes before our eyes—the spectacle of that Church: "every man in his own order," "Christian rulers," "bishops and other ministers," "all Thy people," beseeching God that they each, in accordance with their own vocation, may fulfil the holy word of God in the furtherance of the upbuilding of His Kingdom. As members of the Church Militant their primary business is to fight; not to dream of victory, but to win it; not to beguile themselves with the illusion that they ought to be in the ideal state of the New Jerusalem where milk and honey abound for the elect, but that they are set to push out the frontiers of the Kingdom into hostile territory, where they will be troubled on every side, where without are fightings and within are fears. But neither the trouble, nor the fightings, nor the fears are of much consequence; what endangers our position is the possession of a false ideal of the Kingdom as a Kingdom of peace and plenty, filled with the shouts of those who feast. Nothing is more disastrous for the spiritual effectiveness of a member of the Church Militant than the assumption that he is really a member of the Church Triumphant, and ought not to be called upon to fight, that the very existence of controversies and of divisions is an evidence of the

failure of the Kingdom, rather than, as they are, the evidence of its vitality. The penitent is told by his director that the fact that he is tempted is unimportant; the fact on which to focus his attention is whether he is adequately resisting temptation. So it is in the life of the Church; not to be fighting is an indication of a state of death. Activity is the inevitable sign of life, and in the spiritual life activity against sin.

The phenomena of our own time are out of perspective in relation to the whole life of the Church. They are too near for us to see their meaning, and their importance is inevitably exaggerated. We have only to look back over a century of Church history to see many times which were thought to be times of acute crisis, when the whole life of the Church hung on some decision of authority shortly to be made, which, as we see them now in their relation to the whole facts and not in isolation, do not look critical at all, and the flutter of contemporaries over them looks a little absurd. It happens some time that in a picture gallery one comes suddenly upon a picture which seems a mere mass of unrelated daubs of color; a meaning appears perhaps dimly; and as one backs off across the gallery the apparently unrelated color-masses melt into a harmonious whole, and a vision of beauty of earth or sea emerges. It is somewhat that way with our vision of contemporary facts of the life of the Church. We see the occurring facts as unrelated happenings, as crude masses of error or sin which threaten the very life of the Church. In our terror, in our anxiety, we cry out and protest that the life of the Church is in danger, or even that we cannot be any party to this outrage and must flee to a position of personal safety lest we lose our soul by our complicity, all the time forgetting that

the vocation of a soldier is a vocation not to save his life, but to risk it. It is better to die fighting on the frontier than to live feasting in quiet in the false security of a position to which we are not assigned. Perhaps here, as well as in other circumstances, our Lord's saying is pregnant. "He that findeth his life shall lose it, and he that loseth his life for My sake shall find it." The greatest ocean wave, the experts tell us, is the tide that travels round the earth once in about twenty-four hours. It is too great a wave to be seen by the eye. We only become aware of it by the rise and fall of the waters. What we do see are the minor waves, the rise and fall of which are instantly perceived, and which break upon the shore at our feet and compel our attention. So it is with the movement in the life of the Church. As a whole it is too big to be perceived at any time. We perceive only the flash of surface wavelets which sparkle in the sunlight, or the dash of the surf upon the rocky shore. According to our temperaments we pick out this or that phenomenon, or group of phenomena, as being significant or critical in the Church's life. It would be well if we could study history a little more closely and observe how the crises which were considered fatal, or the successes which seemed the final triumph, alike become small episodes in the life of the body of Christ.

In the meantime we are to fight the battle of the Church Militant, and fight it with an intelligent understanding of the field we are called to fight in and of the nature of the combat we wage. We need to understand that we conquer heresy and error and sin effectively by what I may call indirect methods. As the individual Christian overcomes a special temptation by the development of spiritual strength, so the elect as a whole: "the

weapons of our warfare are not carnal." The fight of the Church Militant is doubtless a fight against evil, but its method is to "overcome evil with good." Its vital battle is within itself. Its success or failure depends upon its ability to develop spiritual strength.

Ultimately, then, our fight is for the attainment of a higher standard of spiritual life. That is the only success worth considering. Other things are incidental to that. "Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things shall be added unto you." When the Church—these authorities and people who pass before us in the prayer for the Church—ceases to stress spiritual character and looks to other means and other fields of success, the Church is fallen on evil times. The standard of the Gospel life must not be compromised but sustained at its full height and presented in all its difficulty. To pad the Cross so that it will not hurt our backs when we carry it is an impossible undertaking.

That part of the prayer which is especially for the people presents this issue clearly. "That with meek heart and due reverence they may hear and receive Thy holy Word, truly serving Thee in holiness and righteousness all the days of their life." Meekness and reverence is the road we travel to obtain holiness and righteousness.

The success of the Church then is conditional upon the acquirement by its membership of those deep spiritual qualities which are the qualities of the Christian life. Precisely here is the battle joined. This is the mark of a standing or falling Church. The vital question is, is the Church at any time through its "Christian rulers" and its "bishops and other ministers" holding before "Thy people" unflinchingly, and without compromise or reservation, the ideals of our Lord's life and teaching, holding

them not as a standard politely saluted from a safe distance, but presenting them first of all as the actual standards of their own life. Judgment begins at the house of God and there must be displayed, if the Church is to do its work adequately, the ideals of the Gospel at work. A clergy that is merely on the level of respectability, as respectability is at any time and in any circle conceived, which is in itself worldly and self-indulgent, does not express the mind of Christ, and will not set forward the Kingdom of God. The righteous demand on those who are called to positions of leadership in the Church of God to-day is that they be eminent in spiritual qualities, capable of guiding those committed to their charge in all the ways of God. Neither pressure of business, nor worry of administration, can excuse them from this obligation, the obligation "to be messengers, watchmen and stewards of the Lord. To teach, to premonish, to feed and to provide for the Lord's family, to seek for Christ's sheep that are dispersed abroad and for His children, who are in the midst of this naughty world, that they may be saved through Christ, forever."

This is the essential battle, the battle to raise human life to a higher level, to spiritualize it. The Church will always succeed if it puts that first among its ambitions. Its ministers, too, will always succeed if that is their aim. A young man wrote from the battlefield, "I had decided, no matter how successful I was at Oxford, to go and teach in an ordinary secondary school. . . . I want to teach children what love and beauty are, and how infinitely better goodness is than mere satisfaction—is it satisfaction?—of physical desires." That is a truly Christian ambition, an ambition of humility. It may be supplemented by S. Vincent de

Paul's prayer for newly ordained priests: "I have prayed, and will pray, that our Lord may give them an ever new desire for the Sacrifice, and grace that they may never offer it merely from habit." When and where the Church Militant produces such qualities, and commands such service, there is no failure. The fact itself is success.

THE THIRTEENTH MEDITATION

THE EXHORTATIONS

There are no less than four *Exhortations* embodied in our Prayer Book Mass. After the Prayer for the Church it is ordered that the priest shall say, at least once each month, the long Exhortation beginning "Dearly beloved in the Lord. . . ." Following this is the familiar "Ye who do truly. . . ." At the end of the Mass is another Exhortation, some four or five hundred words long, which is enjoined when notice of a celebration of the Holy Communion is given out. This is followed by an alternative form, equally long, to be used if the people are negligent in their attendance. In addition the Prayer Book contemplates that ordinarily the worshipper will have been exhorted, in Matins, by the "Dearly beloved brethren." The idea, as well as much of the actual wording, of these exhortations derives directly from continental Protestantism, Lutheran or Genevan. They made their first appearance in the *Order of Communion,*—the initial liturgical reform,—in 1548. This *Order* was a set of communion devotions, in English, introduced into the middle of the unchanged Latin mass. It comprised Exhortations, Confession, Absolution, Comfortable Words, Prayer of Humble Access, the words of administration and the Blessing. These *communion devotions* were taken over into the New Prayer Book liturgy when that supplanted the ancient missal. They were introduced because of a real and deeply felt need of the mass of the people for elemental religious instruction.

Let us listen to the words of S. Paul:

He that eateth and drinketh in an unworthy manner, eateth and drinketh judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord's body.

Let us picture:

JUDAS, sitting at table with our Lord at the Last Supper. How vividly all the details of this scene stand out before us—the gathering about the table, the grouping of the Apostles, the eating of the Passover. We are conscious whenever we call the picture before us of one figure out of place there—the figure of Judas. S. John leans on our Lord's breast, S. Peter sits near, and somewhere within reach, so that he could be handed the sop, Judas. As we look at him it seems that the shadow of the great crime is already on him: he has made up his mind to betray our Lord—*his* Lord. This purpose our Lord reads as He looks into his soul. And yet there is no movement of anger, of repulsion, no disturbance of the perfect calm with which our Lord goes on with his converse with the Apostles. He has, no doubt, understood the possibilities of this man for long; yet He has continued to tolerate him in the intimacy of His life with the Apostolic band. When He taught He let Judas stand in the circle that surrounded Him. When, in the retirement of whatever was their passing resting-place, He talked quietly with the Apostles, His eye fell on the face of Judas—but He made no sign. He

made use of him from day to day as the business man of the Apostolic company, left him in charge of their little store of money, though all the time He knew he was a thief. And now He suffers him to sit near Him at the table—to sit till the last possible moment—for there is a moment beyond which he cannot be endured: he must not partake of the Supper. Therefore he is dismissed. *What thou doest, do quickly.* And he went out. *And it was night.*

Consider, first,

That our Lord's attitude toward Judas, which it is our impulse to think utterly strange, is, in fact, comprehensible, because it is the revealed attitude of God toward sinners. *The Lord is long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish.* Long-suffering is one of the qualities of God that the New Testament most dwells on. It is our temptation, indeed, to resent this divine self-restraint which appears to look on while sin reigns in the world. Even the souls of the redeemed cry from beneath the altar, *How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?* But God bids them *rest yet for a little season,* for His patience is not yet run out. Yes, we can understand the attitude of our Lord; what it is difficult to understand is the attitude of Judas. How could *he* live day by day with our Lord and be unchanged? How could he go on nursing a secret sin while he looked in the face of incarnate truth and purity? How could he hear our Lord declaring the nature and the results of sin, and see Him offering forgiveness to those who turned from sin, and feel no impulse to repentance in his own heart? As one sits quietly and

thinks of it, it is incredible; but as one goes out into the world of men and observes human nature in action, it is a visible fact. Remember, *Judas knew less of our Lord than we do.* He had not been trained from childhood to confess Him God over all, blessed forever. Christendom is full of men and women who have abandoned their allegiance and denied their Lord for the vicious indulgence of their senses, through intellectual conceit, through love of mere pleasure. Judas is not an isolated phenomenon, a single noxious bloom in the garden of humanity; he is the exceeding great multitude of those who willingly live in mortal sin, scoffing at the thought of repentance. And our Lord still moves among them, offering Himself to their insults, suffering Himself to be jeered at and blasphemed, even permitting that there be distributed to them, as he did not permit to Judas, the sacred symbols of His Body and Blood. The hopefulness of God is wonderful! *The Lord is long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.*

Consider, second,

How you have presumed on the long-suffering of God. It is not necessary to be a Judas to do that: all that is necessary is to persist willingly in sin. It is just that element of wilfulness in human nature—in one's self—that appalls one. It is at once so inconceivable and so common. One looks back over one's past and sees that often one has chosen, with quite deliberate choice, open-eyed and understanding, to put aside the will of God and go one's own way! As some fact of our experience rises before us, we shudder to think what must have been our spiritual disaster if the long-suffering of the

Lord had then failed. How many times have we greedily chosen the world, though we knew we had no right to it and that we were dishonoring our Master by our choice. How often have we shaken off the "interference," the "restraint," the "narrowness" of religious precepts, and defiantly gone our way to our chosen indulgence? There is often within the Church a certain defiance of the Church's laws and standards, which insists upon participating in the most sacred mysteries of the Church while alien in spirit from all that those mysteries imply in the way of fitness for their reception. This is a very horrible thing, but we cannot close our eyes to the facts. And the Church itself is under no illusion in this matter. It is not from an improvised rostrum in a city square, to the mixed multitude which passes by, but from the altar itself that the Church directs the priest to say: "If any of you be a blasphemer of God, an hinderer or slanderer of His Word, an adulterer, or be in malice, or envy, or in any other grievous crime, repent you of your sins, or else come not to that holy Table." The wisdom and experience of the Church foresees the possibility of the presence of Judas, and strives to obtain that he go out to his work before the sacred banquet is partaken of. Let us think for a moment of our own case, and whether we are clad in "the marriage garment required by God in holy Scripture" of those who will be "worthy partakers of that holy Table."

Let us then pray,

For a deep and true repentance for all our sins. Pray that you may see yourself as God sees you. Pray that the long-suffering of God may lead you to the utter

abandonment of sin and acceptance of his offered salvation.

Almighty and merciful God, the Fountain of all goodness, Who knowest the thoughts of our hearts, we confess unto Thee that we have sinned against Thee, and done evil in Thy sight. Wash us, we beseech Thee, from the stains of our past sins, and give us grace and power to put away all hurtful things, so that, being delivered from the bondage of sin, we may bring forth worthy fruits of repentance. O Eternal Light, shine into our hearts, O Eternal Goodness, deliver us from evil. O Eternal Power, be Thou our support. O Eternal Wisdom, scatter the darkness of our ignorance. O Eternal Pity, have mercy upon us. Grant unto us, that with all our hearts, and minds, and strength, we may evermore seek Thy face; and finally bring us, in Thine infinite mercy, to Thy holy presence. So strengthen our weakness, that, following in the footsteps of Thy blessed Son, we may obtain Thy mercy, and enter into Thy promised joy; through the same Jesus Christ, our only Saviour and Redeemer.

. . . . . .

The Exhortations

The exhortations in the Book of Common Prayer sound a note of warning to those who would receive the Holy Communion, while at the same time they stress the necessity for such reception. Very earnestly and lovingly the exhortation to be used by the priest "in case he shall see the people negligent to come to the Holy Communion," says: "I intend by God's grace, to celebrate the Lord's Supper: unto which, in God's behalf, I bid

you all who are here present, and beseech you, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, that ye will not refuse to come thereto, being so lovingly called and bid by God Himself."

It is a very eloquent and moving appeal as it goes on to analyze the excuses men make for abstaining from the sacrament, and to urge the grounds for reception. On the other hand it is necessary, as the second exhortation does, to insist on the dangers of "the unworthy receiving thereof." This sacrament is "so divine and comfortable a thing to those who receive it worthily, and so dangerous to those who will presume to receive it unworthily," that both aspects of our relation to the Holy Communion must be emphasized. We shall concern ourselves for the present with that part of the preparation which is included in the notion of repentance.

The need of repentance is an universal need of the human race, and it is universally felt. Men can echo the words of Solomon, "For there is no man who sinneth not." S. John's words meet universal approval: "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." It is only the sophisticated intellect that denies sin, and no doubt in so doing commits the sin against the Holy Spirit which has no forgiveness in this world or the next.

The need of repentance can be read in all religions, in the variety of their rites, and more especially in the rite of sacrifice. As we are not concerned with the history of religion, however, we pass that by and turn to the nature of repentance itself, and of Christian repentance in particular. The person who has been at all instructed in the Christian religion feels the need of repentance when he considers either his sin or his Saviour. Often it is the thought of the sin itself which is prominent, at

least consciously, in repentance. One has had certain ideals of life and one realizes how far one has fallen short of them. There is a sense of failure, and of disgrace; of disgust with one's own weaknesses and the general futility of one's own conduct. It does not seem worth one's while to consider the broader issues in one's relation to God. One is simply outraged at the revelation of one's own stupidity and weakness as manifested in the power of habit, or the ineffectiveness and cowardice that one has shown in meeting a given situation. What did one get, one asks oneself, that was in the least an equivalent of what one paid? Leaving out the notion of an offended God, was one's momentary indulgence, the pleasure one gained, the popularity that came to one, the good one got,—have any of these proved in the least satisfying or of permanent use?

That is a common reaction from sin which we have committed, but it is not yet in the religious sense repentance. The vital thing at this stage is whether it will become repentance, or whether we will, under the power of temptation, go on in sin until the inner protest ceases, or loses force, dying down into a more and more faint protest of the conscience. What essentially has happened at this stage is not that we experience a deep grief at having offended God, but that we are deeply mortified at having offended self. It is not the love of God that is violated, but the love of self that is wounded. A good deal that passes for repentance is sorrow for self rather than sorrow for having injured God. I fancy that most of us can recall that the things which we have felt deepest shame about were not sins at all, but occurrences to which we look back with a sense of our own inadequacy and futility.

This self indeed is the strong point of repentance, or it may be, of revolt. The proud self finds it so difficult to obey anyone else that it quite often rejects what it knows to be the divine will. I have known a young man to say, "I know I am sinning, but I have no intention whatever of giving it up." Self-indulgence bore down all other considerations. Or it may be the arrogance of opinion which defies God Himself, as in John Stuart Mill's well-known protest. "If an omnipotent being can condemn me to Hell for refusing to believe what I see no reason for believing, to Hell I will go." This, of course, is merely silly bravado, an extreme expression of the morbid self. What we need is to discover the weakness of isolation, and that our strength is brought out and increased by the very fact of dependence. It is not ungoverned power, but restrained power that attains the highest results. It is not the isolated self, but the self united to God which is powerful. As Amiel puts it, "Self-interest is the survival of the animal within us; humanity only begins for man with self-surrender." The animal manifests itself even after we think we have made a surrender of self, in a certain self-will and obstinacy in clinging to opinion. "Obstinacy is self-will asserting itself without being able to justify itself. It is persistent without a plausible motive. It is the tenacity of self-love, substituted for the tenacity of reason and conscience."

That form of revolt from past conduct, which is disgust with self, may very well be the initial step to a true repentance. It may result in the first place in a review of our lives, a calm reconsideration of them, leading to a confession of their failure. The confession of our failure towards God, whatever may be our success manward,

is a very bitter thing to face, but it may be the beginning of a very wonderful thing. Failure is often but the finding out of the truth about ourselves. To discover

> The soil'd glory
> And the trailing wing

is a moment of intense bitterness and disillusion, but it may end in the prostration of the penitent before the feet of God.

> Better in bitterest agony to lie,
> Before Thy throne,
> Than through much increase to be lifted high,
> And stand alone.

It was when the prodigal came to himself that he began to think of home and father. It is no doubt humiliating that it should be so, but it is often the abject failure of our own plan that turns us to the love of God. We have seen it often, have we not? that proud shaking off of "restraints," that assertion of ability to manage our own affairs, that restlessness under the pressure of spiritual principle, ending in utter revolt, and then the collapse some time in the future; it may be a far future. The priest remembers the faces looking through the grating of the confessional: those broken voices saying, "Father, I have not made my confession for ten, fifteen, twenty years." Or he remembers those beds where men and women lie dying, and at last confessing the emptiness of life they had been leading. They come back from far countries, those lives now confessing their failure. They come back with empty bellies which the husks have not satisfied, with repressed hungers now at last permitted to

come to the surface. They come back saying, "I was never at rest. I was never really satisfied, though I tried to persuade myself I was. I tried to make myself believe that my situation was peculiar. That my temperament demanded what others could do without. I tried to lay the fault on nature, on circumstance, on anything but my own selfish will, but now at last God has told me the truth."

I gave thee of Mine own creative power
With winged imagination for thy dower;
That which thou wilt thou canst: no seed of thought
E'er sank into thy soul, but sprang to flower,

And fruited, or for blessing or for ban;
Yet, when thou com'st the harvest field to scan,
"Some enemy," thou say'st, "Hath planted tares!"
I tell thee nay; thou art thyself the man.

The sense of failure may lead men to despair, or it may lead men to repentance. Lead to it, because the sense of failure in itself is in no sense repentance. It may open one's eyes to the need of something outside self, to the fact that a self-centered and a self-supported life is inadequate to the demands made upon it. But that is not the same thing as having found the mystical support which is adequate to our needs. It sets us on the path of discovery perhaps, but no more.

There is another experience which sometimes acts as a stimulus to repentance, but which, like failure, is far indeed from being repentance. That is fear. There are moments in every life, no matter how careless it may be, when it is compelled to face the failure, to realize what death means, and to ask, what then? After death,

what? There are no doubt many whose imagination is so poor, or whose mentality is so low, that this thought makes but a momentary impression. There are many, too, who succeed habitually in pushing the intrusive thought away, but sometimes it comes with force, and I fancy more often, and with more insistence than we would infer from men's conversation and conduct. The human race is a race of "bluffers" and those thoughts which are disagreeable they hide out of sight. They oftentimes succeed in "bluffing" themselves into a conviction that they do not believe what actually they do believe. Many a blustering infidel really believes in God and fears death.

Yet there come times when the future insists on being considered. Other men die, and we have to attend their funerals. We fall ill, and we question ourselves whether the illness is unto death or no. Or it may not be the thought of death which brings us face to face with reality. It may be the stirrings of conscience. Conscience frequently sleeps a long time and is then suddenly awakened, it may be by some new sin, or by some arrow of God which succeeds in piercing the armor of our self-satisfaction. For God, too, constantly "draws His bow at a venture," and now and again a flying shaft hits the joint of the harness. Then are men troubled as a dreamer is troubled by ill dreams. Then they stir uneasily in the drugged sleep which habitually is theirs and awaken to find the eyes of God fixed on them. Then fear seizes them and they seek where deliverance can be found. And this too may be the impulse which sends them seeking the road to God, but still it is not repentance. Fear that is only fear of consequences, which is aroused by the selfish consideration of what may pos-

sibly happen to us, must be transformed into something better before it can lead us to the feet of God.

In order truly to repent we have in some sense, and to some degree, to see God. It is the vision of God and of our contrast with it that sends us to our knees. I do not, of course, mean the saint's vision of God, the vision which is the consummation of the life of union, but the child's vision of the Father, which, however dim, is still clear enough to rouse in him the meaning of the relation which is his. This is that vision which came to the prodigal among the swine, the inrush of what *father* meant and his own unworthiness as son. It is that last which is the hopeful sign. Had the prodigal thought of home as a place to which he had a right, as a place that he might go to at any time and be restored to the old footing, as a place of refuge when he was tired of the harlots and the pigs, there would have been no hope for him. Hope lay in the fact that his vision was not of a child restored to his old privileges, but a servant suffered to share the warmth and the food to which he had forfeited all title.

"I am no more worthy to be called thy son." That is the best starting-point, for it implies an understanding of the gulf that sin has dug between the sinner and God, a gulf which only God can bridge. And from that attitude of soul can arise the vision of God bridging the distance which the sinner now feels is so great. The aroused thought is now carried away from self to the contemplation of God. Does He really forgive? What ground has one for thinking that He does? And even if He forgives on occasion, will He, can He, forgive such a one as I? Have I not put myself out of the reach of any possible forgiveness?

Answers have to be found to these questions, and it is as well that they should not be found too easily; that we should not get too superficial a notion of the divine attitude towards sin. There is a certain sentimental preaching of the divine mercy and forgiveness which is well calculated to make the sinner indifferent to sin rather than repentant. We get from such preaching a notion of God as being so anxious to forgive that He does not take much note whether the sinner is repentant or no. He takes his professions at their face value. But repentance is something more than acknowledging the fact that one is a sinner; it implies the detaching of one's self from sin, a detachment that at the time is real, even if later there be a relapse. It is of vast importance that the sinner should take a very serious view of the effects of sin, and that repentance is not a light-hearted acknowledgment that we have been wrong in the past, with an expectancy that God will overlook it.

I think it would help to such a recognition of the gravity of sin if we were to insist more than we do upon the meaning of the temporal penalty of sin. We are told to repent and confess and that we go away from the confessional forgiven. That is blessedly true; but it is also true that we go away with some of the temporal penalty of sin to pay. It may be in the way of physical suffering which has been induced by the manner of our past life. It may be in the way of intellectual limitation which our neglect of prayer has brought upon us. Certainly it will be in the immaturity of spiritual development which is the result of the neglect of God and His will. The best of us go out of this world immature, and what then will be the state of those who are saved "so as by fire?" We cannot help the conclusion that

from many of the saved the capacity for the vision of God is far removed.

That is the significance of Purgatory, is it not? It is the state of the imperfect saved. The state of discipline and training of the spiritually immature. And although it is a better state than the state we are now in, although it be without temptations, although it have the consciousness of salvation and a clearer vision of God, I do not think that we ought to deceive ourselves into thinking it a mild form of Heaven. A clear understanding of our own deficiencies and failures, an unveiled picture of our own past stupidities and sins, cannot be a pleasant thing to contemplate. And although these are in some sense compensated for by the fact that we are saved, they still remain a pain that will increase with our increased perception of what we were offered, and of what we actually are. It will not be the wrath of God which will inflict the punishment on the awakened soul; it will be the unveiling of God's love which will cut deep as we remember how we have scorned it.

It is well for us then, when we are trying to learn repentance as a practical spiritual exercise and find our thought of it rather perfunctory, when we recall our frequent confessions and absolutions, to recall that the next stage of existence to which we shall pass will be that stage of purification in which we shall suffer as well as rejoice; remembering this, we shall be led to a deeper penitence and to severer self-discipline, that we may be so spiritually advanced as to need less of discipline in the coming world. The temporal penalties of sin can in some sense be dealt with here. Prayer and good works and spiritual exercises of all sorts are available means of present spiritual progress. It seems to me at least

that if we actually understood this we should be spiritually more energetic. Many of us still linger under the obsession of an ancestral Protestantism and ignore, even when we have learned not to deny, the fact and nature of Purgatory. Many, too, are lazily content with the thought that it is enough to be saved, whatever may come after. It might be well to ask oneself whether such indifference could be in any safe way considered a state of salvation. More energy and a wider scope in repentance is what we all need. A conviction that although God, and God alone can forgive sins, that does not leave us without further responsibility than the facile acknowledgment of sin. After absolution there succeeds a work of reconstruction, and in that work, while the grace of God supplies needed energy, we have largely to act. A boy does not become a skilled carpenter when his father gives him a tool box and neither do we become saints when God absolves us and gives us His grace. The discipline of character remains to be accomplished which may be otherwise described as the life of repentance and good works.

The ultimate motive of repentance, of course, is to be found in the love of God. That is not generally where we begin in the way of repentance but where we end, if we go on to a full and complete repentance. We begin with some partial and preparatory repentance, a repentance which is founded rather in our own sense of need, or our own feeling of the sinfulness of certain actions, rather than in the understanding of the effect of our actions on our relation with God. When we try to analyze the motive I think we find that we rarely, if ever, start from a conception of sin as an offense against the love of God. We start rather from this or that sin

as an offense against a vaguely conceived moral law. It is the notion of law violated rather than of love wounded that is at the root of our repentance, and I believe that in that fact lies the explanation of the common feeling on the part of the penitent when actually growing in depth and earnestness that his repentance is defective, or, as he usually phrases it, "I don't seem to be really sorry for my sins." It is indeed extremely difficult to feel deep sorrow for having broken a law, and even when the law is God's law, the expression of the divine mind, sorrow is not apt to be very deep.

What is needed is a clearer conception that in sin and repentance we are dealing with a person. That back of what we tend to conceive as law there is a personal love for us, of which the law is the expression. In other words, that the mind of God is expressive of a will which seeks our highest good and is pointing the way by which the good may be attained. There is nothing arbitrary in the will of God. What we conceive as law is not a body of rules imposed on us for the sake of discipline, or a set of enactments which might as well be anything else. God's will for us is what it is because the way that it points is the way of our perfecting. It is the only way by which we can achieve our ideal. S. Paul states it broadly when he says, "This is the will of God, even your sanctification."

The love of God seeks that end, our sanctification, and it is a love that declines to be thwarted. When sin interposes and tries to defeat this end of love, love seeks new ways of expression, seeks new means of overcoming the opposition of sin, seeks new allurements by which to draw its wanderers home. Therefore the love of God shrinks from no sacrifice, but throws itself into the

breach made by sin, and reveals itself as the Incarnate Love of Bethlehem and Calvary. Men are appalled and stumble before the mystery of evil, but to me the ultimate mystery of the universe is the mystery of good. That "while we were yet sinners Christ died for us." The mystery in this is the love of God which passionately seeks to rescue those who do not care to be rescued, which loves our souls to the very death, the souls which we do not care enough for to sacrifice in their interests the passing gratification of the senses. We whine like stupid children, "Why should I give up this pleasure, or forego that indulgence?" in the very face of a God "Who loved us and gave Himself for us"; Who, when we had no possibility of Heaven, "so loved the world that He gave His only Begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on Him shall not perish but have everlasting life." It is understandable that a man should balance sin against law and disregard law and penalty. It is inconceivable that a man should see sin in the light of the Cross, and not go away with a broken heart.

A true repentance then, repentance in the full and complete sense of the word, is founded in the perception and the meaning of "God is love." It is the heartbroken cry of the child as he turns to the Father, now seeing his own act revealed in its result, the wound to the heart of God. Because deep and true repentance, which the spiritual writers call true contrition, is thus an act of love meeting love, of two hearts flowing into union. The Church has always regarded it as in itself the very abolition of all bars between the soul and God. True contrition is complete absolution. "If in the examination at night I say to Almighty God with all my heart that it grieveth me, O my God, that I have offended Thee, be-

cause I love Thee above all created things, and would willingly have lost them all rather than have sinned; and with Thy grace I purpose to confess all my sins, with a determination never more to return to them, at that very instant I am justified. And if that night I should die suddenly without being able to confess myself, although I had committed many mortal sins, I should not be condemned for them." [1]

No doubt we need, in order to repent, to see self. An understanding of self is all-important, but it is not all-sufficient. We need also to see God. The vision of self may very well sink us in hopelessness and despair, but with the vision of God hope returns. With it too comes stimulation. It is not the man who sees his faults who therefore repents. There are multitudes of men who have no doubt of their own sinfulness who still are not moved to repentance. The motive of repentance comes when they see God, and that God is love. "Truly," says Rolle of Hampole, "he who is stirred with busy love, and is continually with Jesus in thought, full soon perceives his own faults, the which correcting, henceforward he is 'ware of them; and so he brings righteousness busily to birth, until he is led to God and may sit with heavenly citizens in everlasting seats. Therefore he stands clear in conscience and is steadfast in all good ways, the which is never noyed with worldly heaviness, nor gladdened with vain glory."

True repentance, we recall, is a form of suffering, therefore we may expect that the suffering will be, in some degree at least, a measure of the repentance. If we can rise from a careful self-examination, having seen

[1] De Ponte, *Meditations* I, 308.

ourselves as those who have wounded the love of God, and yet be ourselves unmoved by the vision, we may well doubt of the depth of our repentance, of the sincerity of our love. We suffer in proportion as we love. If love goes deep so does suffering take us down into the depths. It is this inner suffering which springs from love which is so difficult to bear. The martyrs bore the extremity of physical suffering because they were sustained by the love of God shed abroad in their hearts. And it is the same love which reveals to us at once the appalling nature of our sin and the readiness and sufficiency of the remedy. Therefore it is that the Sacred Heart is, in a certain way, a more appealing revelation of love than the Crucifix. Our Lord's final agony on the Cross came in a hiding of love, in a veiling of the Father's face. "Thou didst hide Thy face from me, and I was troubled." He bore the physical agony without shrinking. He cried out in agony at the sense of the loss of the Presence; and in so far as we have attained spiritual perception we are driven to repentance by the same awful discovery that our sins have hid His face from us: that we have separated ourselves from the love of God.

There is of course but one test of true repentance. The sincere effort to reform. That facile repentance which has no issue in a change of life, undertaken with a decided will, has little, if any, value. We may easily deceive ourselves as to what we actually intend, but the days as they pass will show the sincerity of our professions. It may be a long and desperate struggle, but struggle there must be, a struggle till we have attained success, if so be that we are led by the love of God. Disgust with self, fear of consequences, sense of a vio-

lated law, all these may well be overlaid by custom and die out, but if there is a true love of God, if we have understood the yearning of the Sacred Heart over sinners, then shall we persevere to the end and be saved.

THE FOURTEENTH MEDITATION

THE CONFESSION

The Catholic teaching has always been that, normally, sacramental confession is necessary for post-baptismal mortal sin. The office for the Visitation of the Sick in the English Prayer Book orders that the sick person be given an opportunity for confession, and it is interesting to know that the canons of the Irish Episcopal Church, until quite recently, commanded the clergy to give notice of hours for confession on the day preceding the offering of the Holy Sacrifice, the priest's presence in church for that purpose being further emphasized by tolling the church bell. But even those who are free from serious sin will have slight faults to reproach themselves with, and for these, and to renew our contrition for past sins, the form of *General Confession* before communion is provided. It is borrowed largely from a Lutheran compilation, Hermann's *Consultation.* In the Roman mass, when it comes time for communions, those about to receive, or the server on their behalf, say the *Confiteor* and the celebrant pronounces absolution.

Let us listen to the words of the Publican:

God, be merciful to me, a sinner.

Let us picture:

THE Publican praying in the Temple. One wonders if he is conscious of the surprise that his presence creates. To the Pharisaic observer a Publican is out of place in the Temple. This is the house of God—of the Pharisee's God. It is hardly the place for a Publican! It is the place where one thanks God for one's virtues—that one is not as other men are—not the place of those in whom virtue is conspicuously lacking. To the Pharisee the presence of the Publican has the value of a shadow to emphasise the high light of his own righteousness. The Publican is, no doubt, oblivious to all this. That he is, as it were officially, a sinner, does not trouble him; what troubles him is that his own conscience confirms the fact, if not the details, of the Pharisaic judgment. But though he is a sinner he has the fundamental quality of the saint—the quality so lacking in the Pharisee—humility. See him as he stands *afar off,* with bowed head, absorbed in the conviction of his own unworthiness in God's sight. Hear the murmured words: *God be merciful.* All the life and movement of the Temple court swirls about him, and he does not see it. Around him men stand praying, and he is unconscious of them. He has hid himself in the silence and loneliness of his own soul, hardly daring to

think of God. One likes to think of that figure, solitary amid the crowd, not as one of our Lord's imaginative creations, but as one that had some day caught His eye and revealed its significance to Him Who knows what is in man. He sees in this complete self-abandonment of the Publican, the opportunity of God. God can enter this soul that is empty of self. "Where there is nothing, there is God." So this man went down to his house justified.

Consider, first,

That the fascination that the figure of the Publican holds for us lies in its entire simplicity. There are very few words spent in drawing his portrait, but it is drawn for eternity. We never forget the impression of it. No better illustration can be found of our Lord's saying, *Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.* He may have been a very great sinner indeed; but were his sins many or few, we feel that he now stands quite apart from them—they are abandoned, though the shadow of them still abides. He hesitates to approach God, even while the love of God is drawing him on. He does not cling to sin—he has got through with that—but he wonders whether the God whom he has wounded will be reconciled to him. That is the danger of all who want to turn to God from sin—a fear that God will not turn to them. We never succeed in grasping the greatness of the love of God. God has never turned away; His attitude has always been the same—that of seeking love. And it is when that love finds the sinner that he moves in response to it, till it grows in him and struggles with his shame and fear, and finally conquers both and brings

the sinner to God's feet with his simple prayer for pardon: God be merciful to me, a sinner. Then love has done its work and won its victory and illicited its response, and *perfect love casteth out fear.* It is when our world is reduced to the two terms, the God who loves and the soul that tremblingly responds to that love, that the perfect act of penitence is accomplished. The penitent no sooner whispers, "I have sinned," than the reply comes, "The Lord also hath put away thy sin"; and the Spirit of holiness returns to the house from which it had been driven and the surrendered and purified soul enters the peace of justification.

Consider, second,

Whether we have achieved this entire simplicity of relation with our heavenly Father. Our penitence is so often a troubled and fearful penitence. These are justified only in the one case—that we still cling to sin. There is an attempted penitence that fails because it is only half-hearted: the soul is drawn by the sense of sin to confession, but it remains troubled by the knowledge that sin still has a strong hold upon it. That penitence may be quite sincere, but the love that inspires it is not strong enough to cast out fear. Therefore the torment remains. There are states of mind in which we must be convinced that we can do a thing before we can bring ourselves to action. In this case, we need to be convinced that the power of God in a surrendered life is greater than the power of sin, if we are to yield ourselves and abandon fear; to be convinced that all we have to do is to love God enough to have the bands of our sins fall away. We find it so hard to let go sin and cling only to God. Say what we will, there remains an

undertone of conviction that God will not save us from sin without our help. We remain convinced that we must assert ourselves. But the fact is that all the help we can give, all the cooperation we can offer, is the abandonment of self. When the self ceases to assert itself and lies still in God's arms, it is safe. When it stops thinking of self and thinks only of God, God will reclaim it. If the eye be single—if it rest on but one object, the Sun of Righteousness—the whole body will be full of light. We know, do we not, that in those moments when we give ourselves utterly to God, all the strength of sin has been broken? Even the long-accustomed temptations lose their power of appeal. There have been such moments of quiet in all our lives: why is it that they are not our habitual state? Why do we fall back under the dominion of fear? *Perfect love casteth out fear.*

Let us then pray,

For true contrition. Pray for complete surrender to God. Pray, God be merciful to me, a sinner—and leave yourself in His arms.

We beseech Thee, Almighty God, to behold our prayers, to pour out upon us Thy loving tenderness; that we who are afflicted by reason of our sins, may be refreshed by the coming of our Saviour; through the same Jesuse Christ, our Lord.

The General Confession

I am not proposing to discuss the legitimacy of sacramental confession in the Anglican Communion. Anyone who has a Bible and a Prayer Book, and can read them,

can easily satisfy himself on this matter. If the Anglican Communion did not teach sacramental confession it would be at the expense of repudiating all the past on unity with which it bases its claims to Catholicity. What, however, is beyond doubt is that much of the teaching of the Anglican clergy has been disloyal to their own formularies and lamentably lax in their own practices. While I am not prepared to say that an enforced reception of the Sacrament of Penance is desirable, there can be no doubt that the withdrawal of pressure at the Reformation has had results of the worst kind. The authorities of the Church have tolerated, and indeed participated in, the most flagrant denial of the express teaching of the Church, with the natural result that this sacrament fell into desuetude, practiced by only a few zealous individuals here and there. In this, as in other matters, the last century has seen a steady advance, until to-day the administration of the sacrament has become in a large part of the Church a matter of course.

Out of this laxity of the past there arises an interesting question, largely perhaps academic, as to the binding force of the universal teaching of the Church as to the need of sacramental confession for the absolution of mortal sin. A remnant of that teaching is embodied in the Exhortation in the direction that if any "cannot quiet his own conscience" he is to resort to a "minister of God's Word, and open his grief," that, according to the English book, "he may receive the benefit of absolution, together with ghostly council and advice to the quieting of his conscience and the avoiding of all scruple and doubtfulness." This the American book eviscerates by leaving out the word *absolution;* but I suppose hardly succeeds in effecting any fundamental change in Catholic

theology by so doing. The question raised by such tampering with doctrine is not whether Catholic theology has altered but whether the body making the change remains inside of the Catholic name.

It cannot be held that in the meaning of the Exhortation in the Prayer Book a man who can by any means still the protest of conscience may dispense with sacramental confession. The matters in question, concerning which a man cannot quiet his own conscience, are mortal sins; and by the traditional teaching of the Church these could be effectively dealt with in the normal case only in the confessional. What then are we to think was the state during this period of laxity of the man in mortal sin who did not make his confession? I suppose that we can say that his neglect of sacramental means was excused because of his ignorance, an ignorance which was due, not to his personal neglect, but to the laxity in teaching of the Church authorities. Such a man's responsibility would become active with the acquisition of knowledge, and we cannot believe that to-day individuals who have knowledge of the teaching of the Church as distinguished from the teaching of individual bishops and priests are excused from the use of the sacrament of penance in case of mortal sin. Perhaps the question might not be uselessly raised as to whether the ineffectiveness of the Anglican Communion, which has been so stressed and lamented during the past few years, may not be due not so much to insistence on "outworn creeds" which fail to meet the needs of the modern mind, as to neglect of the use of the sacraments which are the divinely appointed means of union and communion with God. Possibly a revival of sacramental life would do more for

the Church than a repudiation of belief in the Virgin Birth and the Resurrection.

It is here assumed, then, that it is the teaching of the Catholic Church that it is an obligation for all who have sinned mortally to seek absolution in the Sacrament of Penance, and although it be true, as it was pointed out in the preceding meditation, that a perfect act of Charity results in the forgiveness of sin, the belief that we have made such an act does not justify the neglect of the Sacrament. For one thing the rule of the Church is explicit and cannot be set aside because of what we believe ourselves to have done. We are bound to external obedience, even though we are convinced that in a given case it is not absolutely necessary internally. Furthermore, while there is no doubt of the cleansing power of Charity, it can hardly be a safe conclusion that one has in a particular case, and with reference to a particular sin, made such an act. Self-judgment of that sort is extremely temerarious. It was precisely this taking of matters into their own hands and passing on their own case that led men to the gross abuse of the neglect of Penance. When men asserted that they "wanted no man between their soul and God," they really asserted that they needed no man between their soul and God, and in so doing repudiated the whole sacramental system of the Church and, by implication, the whole principle of meditation, which is the very meaning of the Incarnation itself. It is no wonder that the outcome has been the denial of the Incarnation and of the very Divinity of our Lord.

Faithful children of the Church will not raise questions as to the actual obligation to confess in a special case. Such questions melt away in the heat of love, which is the

relation of the child to the Father. The disobedient child is surely not in an ideal state if he raises the question, "Do I have to ask my Father's forgiveness for the wrong I have done?" Surely love drives the child to the father's arms without raising any questions of obligation, and love drives the penitent to the arms of God, his Father; drives him to that means which is the expression of the Father's pardoning love. There is no question here of obligation. To ask about obligation is really to put the matter on a wrong basis. The question here is of privilege: not must I confess, but may I confess? Is the love of the Father really accessible to me, a sinner?

And as we consider the practical action, not the obligation of confession, but the privilege of it, we do not raise any question as to what has to be confessed. Textbooks no doubt raise such questions, and decide that at least all mortal sins must be confessed; but in the making of one's confession one is guided, not by the text of a book, but by the impulse of love. One simply lays bare one's whole spiritual state before God. One would in fact feel rather doubtful of the penitence of one whose self-examination consisted largely in assorting sins with reference to the degree of their guilt, in order to determine what to confess and what not. That would imply a state of soul that was far from one filled with regret for having wounded the love of God.

The normal confession, then, raises no question of great or little, mortal or venial, but is an act of love laying bare its life to the Father in the act of love. Nothing we have to tell seems trivial, for the transforming power of love lends importance to the trivial itself. Anything that indicates the deflection of our will from the Father's we want to lay before Him that He may cleanse this

erring will of ours by His pardon. It is well in all this to forget as far as may be the priest, the representative of God, lest we be turned aside in our confidence of love by the intruding thought of what his opinion would be. This regard for the opinion of the priest is one of the difficulties we have to overcome. This is especially an Anglican difficulty, because of the close association of the people with their clergy in social relations. Knowing them so well outside the confessional they are quite likely to think of their opinions inside it. This, to be sure, results differently in different individuals. Some dislike to confess to a priest they know; others prefer it; but both result in the same fact, an undesirable intrusion of the personality of the priest, in such cases actually fulfilling the Protestant notion, and "getting between the soul and God." This intrusion of personality must be resisted by both priest and penitent. The priest who draws people by personal qualities needs to be very much on his guard lest he, and not the God whom he represents, is the attracting power. And the penitent needs to guard against the intrusion of purely human and personal motive in the sacrament. The tendency, especially a tendency of women, to hunt out a confessor who is "sympathetic" is disastrous, leading not so much to confession of sin as to long conversations, nominally about the spiritual life, but in fact debauches of sentiment. We shall have something more to say of this relation when we come to speak of direction.

Simplicity is the quality to be sought in a confession. The confessions of children are delightful because of that quality. They go directly to the point. They enumerate sins without explanations, or excuses, or circumlocutions of any sort. They always know what they

have done, and if the confessor is doubtful upon any point a direct question elicits a direct answer. With the adult it is oftentimes different. He, or more commonly she, is terribly involved, and finds difficulty in expressing the commonest fact. Circumlocutions take the place of straightforward statements. Excuses are proffered or hinted at. Indirection and allusion take the place of frankness. An absolute impossibility of clear, direct statement is frequent: and all this without any design of concealment or evasion. It is a mental habit growing out of a lack of practice in self-examination, at least in great measure. The person who has been to confession from childhood usually remains childlike in his confessions. He retains the clear and direct statement which he learned when he was young. Those who come to the sacrament in adult life experience more difficulty in clearness and directness, because of their lack of understanding of themselves. In particular they find it difficulty to let a statement stand barely for what it is worth. Standing out that way it looks to them untrue; it will produce a false impression on the confessor, therefore they begin to limit, to explain, to modify. The result, instead of making the original statement clearer, is that it becomes confused, and the confessor is doubtful of just what happened. This tendency to explanation is perhaps the worst fault in the penitent. It is a fairly clear indication of either one of two things: either of a hopelessly confused mind that cannot understand itself and its own workings, or of an egotistic temperament which is concerned not so much with the confession as an act of sorrow before God as with the impression that will be left on the mind of the confessor.

Another temperament very difficult to deal with is the scrupulous temperament. With this temperament nothing is ever settled; no confession is ever finished. There is for one thing a hopeless confusion of values. Everything that has happened is on the same plane, from a malicious lie to the omission to say Grace. Again, there is endless explanation implying a doubt of the intelligence, or of the sanity, of the confessor. There is constant return upon the same fact for fear that all the bearings of it have not been clearly impressed. There is a wretched habit of going back to proceeding confessions and repeating what has already been dealt with, through fear that the penitence has not been adequate, or the confession valid. There is endless weighing of trifles, lest some lurking sin should pass undiscovered; and along with all this there is not infrequently a surprising ignorance of the true spiritual state. It is of course to be expected that the scrupulous temperament will be fretful and complaining, carping and critical, upset by trifles and making constant unreasonable demands on others. One knows people who seem to rake the hidden corners of their souls for a wandering thought in prayer, or the forgetfulness of the Guild Collect, who are oblivious to the fact that in their relations to others they are constantly critical and complaining. Such persons need a different sort of self-examination than that to which they are accustomed. They need pretty sharp discipline from their directors. It is a difficult matter, no doubt, to see oneself clearly, but it is fairly obvious that if we can find in our own lives only the most trivial of faults then we are quite possibly looking in the wrong place. We may unfortunately concern ourselves with minute corners of

life and miss the knowledge of its broad spaces. In self-examination it is dangerous to specialize on certain varieties of sin.

Confession is the confession of definite acts, meaning by an act that to which the will has definitely consented. Mere passing thoughts to which no assent has been given are not matters of confession and when there is doubt about consent the penitent as a rule had better take the benefit of the doubt. Habitual temptations of thought, though not yielded to, may possibly need the advice of a skilled director, but need not be confessed. The scrupulous should uniformly take the benefit of the doubt. The careless would do better to confess everything, even the doubtful. There is no need to attempt the classification of sins, and a good deal of danger. That has been pointed out in attempting a division into mortal and venial. Such classification is for the benefit of the moral theologian, and not of the penitent.

Confession, to be of much benefit as a spiritual discipline, should be regular. What I mean is this: It is possible to look at confession from a twofold point of view. We may regard it simply as a sacrament of the forgiveness of sins, to be resorted to by those who are in mortal sin. In this case its use will be determined by the frequency of grave sin, by the occurrence of a disturbed conscience which cannot quiet itself. Confession in this case will be frequent or infrequent, according to the circumstances, but we may note in this connection that confession before great feasts only is not to be commended. When you try to think out what that means the implication seems to be that it does not matter how long we remain in a state of sin so that we do not receive the Communion in that state. If we are to use the Sacra-

ment of Penance solely as a remedy for mortal sin, the remedy should be applied as soon as the sin is discovered. There is, of course, nothing to be said for confession before the great feasts only. That is purely formalistic and lax, an observance of the letter of the law.

But there is an entirely different point of view from which the Sacrament of Penance may be envisaged. Penance is a part of the training of the soul for eternity. It is one element in the discipline of the spiritual life. Like all sacraments, the Sacrament of Penance confers grace, and its reception by a soul already in a state of grace means an increase of grace. All that pertains to the sacrament, the careful self-examination, the acts of contrition, the humility of the confession itself, the resolution to amend, and the thanksgiving after the absolution, aids the discipline of the spiritual nature of the penitent, and his progressive purification and acquisition of the Christian virtues. From this point of view, of the increase of grace and of a disciplined life, irregular penance is of small value. What is needed is the regular, intelligent use of the sacrament, with the view to our spiritual growth. A regular monthly confession is practically essential here: the lowest terms with which we can hope for much help. A more frequent confession should be determined upon the advice of one's director. That advice will be determined by our earnestness, and by our desire of Communion.

Perhaps it is as well to insist here on the matter of the grace of the sacrament. That the spiritual nature lives and grows by grace, as the physical nature does by food, is a plain fact that seems in need of greater appreciation. Intermittent and disorderly feeding will soon put an end to our physical life, or reduce us to a condition of in-

validism. Now spiritual invalidism is a sufficiently common phenomenon in the ordinary Christian congregation and it can, with a good deal of certainty, be traced to a disorderly use of the sacraments. The Holy Communion is received infrequently, and without due preparation, and the Sacrament of Penance is either not received at all, or is received before Christmas and Easter, or even before Easter alone, but there is no conception in all this of a regular life systematically supported, and a purpose of steady growth towards a clearly perceived ideal; but unless the latter be present anything that can resemble a fully formed Christian character cannot be expected.

We are deceived, or we deceive ourselves by appearances. We adopt, in place of the Christian ideal of holiness, the worldly ideal of goodness. We see about us many "good people" who are not troubling themselves about the sacraments, or a supernatural life. They are infrequent at Communion, or they do not go at all. They are extremely pleasant to meet, are kind and charitable, in short are cultivated human beings. They would perhaps smile indulgently were you to ask them about confession, or perhaps they would be shocked at being connected even in thought with such superstition. We, admiring them for what they are, forget to recall what they are not. They are the best the world can produce, but they have not, and do not claim to have, any present and vital relation to any other world. They are natural, not supernatural.

But the essential point about a Christian, no matter how crude he may appear in comparison with these finished products of the world, is that he is precisely supernatural. Christians have established a hold upon eternity. They have an outlook beyond the "flaming

ramparts of the world." They do not meet questions as to the future with a smile of tolerance, or a shrug and an "I don't know." They may be as undeveloped as you like, and as socially impossible as you like, but they possess a treasure of which the most cultivated and modern heathen has no understanding. A school boy, who knelt by the side of his priest and made his first confession, and then springing to his feet threw his arms about the priest and kissed him, saying, "Gee, father, that was great!" had discovered a secret the most refined agnostic had missed, a secret of the grace of God.

It is by this grace that the Christian lives, and he values it as he does his daily food. For the sake of it he is willing to rise before day to go to the early Mass before he goes forth to his labor. For it he is willing and glad to impose upon himself the discipline of daily self-examination and frequent confession. Sacraments to him mean, not badges of church-membership, or the items of an imposed routine, but they are doors of access to God; doors at which God is always knocking in His great desire of entrance, but doors that He will not force, but wait patiently for their opening. To him the sacraments are means of union with God; are in fact the means of God's entrance into the soul. For grace is really God: God expressing Himself in all His love and favor in the spiritual nature of the Christian. Filled with this conception of the sacraments, and especially of the Sacrament of Penance, the devout Christian has none of that shrinking which is sometimes observed in those approaching the Sacrament of Penance, but goes to it eagerly and gladly as one who goes to the meeting-place where he shall find God. Goes no doubt realizing his sin, realizing it specially as a sin against love, but realizing, too, that

the very love which he has sinned against is here to meet him and receive him with the kiss of pardon and peace.

To return to our starting-point. The General Confession is a confession made by all, and in general terms. It is not at all in the nature of a sacramental confession, but rather in the nature of an act of contrition. Nor is the absolution following it a sacramental absolution. There is no sacramental absolution of sins involved in the action in the Communion Service, any more than there is in the confessions and absolutions in the daily offices of Morning and Evening Prayer. One now and then finds a person, who "does not believe in Confession," who still thinks that he receives absolution through the absolution of the Communion Office. This, of course, is a delusion. If there is any forgiveness received at that time it is because the form of the General Confession is made the expression of an act of contrition. Venial sin, to be sure, is at all times forgiven in answer to prayer.

It does not at all follow that the General Confession is of no value. One may regret the interpretation given it as being a substitute for sacramental confession, and so leading people to a wrong notion of the nature of forgiveness. One may regret its precise place in the Communion Office, and hope for a change in position, but the form itself is valuable, if rightly used. As a united act of contrition on the part of the congregation it is impressive. It would be doubly so in the case of a congregation, the members of which were accustomed to sacramental confession, and were truly renewing their contrition as an immediate preparation for their approach to the altar. It may be said that such acts on the part of the whole congregation tend to become purely formal.

But any forms are liable to misuse, and formalism is not a quality inherent in forms, but is a spiritual attitude in the person using them. All that the form can do is to afford a channel for the expression of certain feelings. If the feelings are absent, there is nothing to express, and the form becomes dead. Still it remains true that the united recitation of a form tends to arouse the feelings that it is intended to canalise.

This tendency to arouse feelings which are dormant is a recognized value of forms. We do not always feel like praying, but we find, when we get upon our knees and take a book of prayers, that we can, as we say, "put our minds on them," with the result that the sluggish spirit is aroused and we pray with increasing earnestness as we go on. Here, too, in this awakening power, lies much of the value of ejaculatory prayer, of acts of faith, hope, charity and contrition; indeed of all those short prayers which are strewn across the day. We get spiritually sluggish, and need to be awakened, and prayers of one sort or another will help. Others accomplish the same end by the repetition of texts of scripture, which they keep stored in their minds. The mind is a sort of treasury, out of which one draws according to one's needs. I think that it is a common experience that those prayers and passages of scripture which we have memorized in the past, perhaps quite unwillingly as children, become of value to us as weapons in our spiritual armory. How often it is that the words of a Collect, or some verse of prophecy, or gospel, comes to our aid just when most we need it! Comes, as it seems, by a kind of inspiration, but really comes through the association of its meaning with the particular need that we at the moment experience.

That does not mean that there is not a kind of inspiration in the act. No doubt God uses the weapons He finds prepared.

Feeling, as often we do, dull and depressed, faced by the fact of our sins, and yet without deep feeling in regard to them, we long for the emotion of contrition, the stir of a wounded heart. This, to be sure, is not a necessity. The value of our contrition does not lie in our emotional reaction to our perceived state. It is enough that the state be perceived, and a definite judgment passed on ourselves. "I do not feel contrition," one says. "Ought I to make my confession in such a dead state?" I am always inclined to answer, especially where there is no mortal sin, "The adequate sign of your actual contrition is that you feel the need of it, and also that you are ready to act in making your confession." Still the actual exercise of contrition is desirable, the feeling of sorrow, if that be possible, and therefore we are told by the masters of the spiritual life that we do well to excite contrition by a resort to appropriate means.

One such means is that upon which we have been dwelling, the recitation of certain forms which are called Acts of Contrition, and which one finds in all Catholic Manuals of prayer. The General Confession in the prayer book is admirable, the Prayer of Humble Access in its way a masterpiece. There are numbers of brief forms, and anyone can recall numerous texts of Scripture which serve the purpose. The "Comfortable Words" are an example at hand which brings us face to face with the pardoning love of God.

Sometimes we feel that we need, or in any case would like, a more vivid presentation of the fact, some stimulus that is not purely intellectual. That, too, is easily

attained. What better than our Crucifix? Kneel before that and let the meaning of it sink into the soul. The Crucifixion never seems to grow old. This or that form loses power and vividness through our familiarity with it, and we do well in that case to seek new forms. The crucifix remains with its always fresh appeal, pressing home to us the truth that "Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners." The crucified love stirs us as nothing else, reaches us with its always fresh appeal to association with the Victim, burning us with a sense of shame at having even momentarily deserted Him.

There are times when we feel that we want to give greater expression to all this, and gain greater comfort in sorrow by the spectacle of the Crucified. What better then than to follow the "Way of the Cross"? It may be that we can go to church and "make the Stations." Or it may be that what we can do is to use a set of cards of the Stations in our own room. It is a very good thing to have a set of such cards that we can set out at any time. We can, to be sure, use just the Gospel text, but we were seeking a way of special vividness as a means of arousing a special contrition, and the pictures are undoubtedly, for most temperaments, an aid to this.

Much the same result can be accomplished by the use of the Rosary, recited with a longer or a shorter meditation on the Mysteries as time controls. In the Sorrowful Mysteries especially we seem to be associating ourselves with the sorrows of our Lady, and in spirit to go along with her up the Sorrowful Way that leads out to Calvary, and with her to watch the dying of her Divine Son.

This contrition that we are striving to kindle is by no means an isolated quality in the life of the Christian; spots of darkness falling along the light path. The life

of the Christian is a life of penitence. That is his customary attitude. He belongs to a sinful race, and he lives in a sinful world, and no matter how sure he is that his own sins have been pardoned and put away he cannot altogether detach himself from his brother, nor does he so wish. Penitence for his own sin, and thankfulness for his forgiveness,—yes, that always; but constantly, too, penitence for the sins of others; of all those near and dear to him, of all men everywhere who forget or deny God. It is a part of the Christian crossbearing that he feels incessantly the sins that are all about him; that his prayers are full of intercessions for sinners; that the intention of his Masses is given to them; that his good works are done with their intention. Thus the life of the Christian is a continual Way of Sorrow, which does not mean in experience that he is a wearied or depressed person. On the contrary, he is glad and rejoices in the grace of God, which has enriched him, and given him not only a present forgiveness, but also "somewhat to offer" on behalf of others. This is one, and the chief, way of entering into the life of others and fulfilling one's obligation as a member of the Body. "If one member suffer all the members suffer with it." The Christian gets rid of the temptation to individualism when he understands his place in the Body, and he rejoices to offer himself on behalf of his brethren.

THE FIFTEENTH MEDITATION

THE ABSOLUTION

The *Absolution* which the priest pronounces in our Mass is taken partly from Hermann's Lutheran formulary, the *Consultation,* and partly from the old Latin form.

In the First English Prayer Book all the "communion devotions" (Exhortation, Confession, Absolution, Comfortable Words and Prayer of Humble Access) were placed together, after the conclusion and immediately before the communion of the people, for which they are a preparation. This is a more logical and intelligible arrangement than the one we now have and its restoration has been urged in many Prayer Book revision plans. Our American revision commission proposes to reunite these devotions by placing the Prayer of Humble Access immediately after the Comfortable Words.

Let us listen to the words of the Gospel:

Jesus riseth from supper, and laid aside his garments; and took a towel, and girded himself. After that he poureth water into a basin, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded.

Let us picture:

OUR Lord washing the feet of the Apostles. It was during the passion Supper, but before the first Eucharist, that our Lord gave to his disciples this wonderful lesson. Try to see our Lord going from one Apostle to another, with towel and basin, washing and wiping their feet. If we had been actual onlookers at the scene what different emotions we should have seen written on the faces of these men—surprise, shrinking, mere wonder. We get a vivid glimpse of the drama in the expostulation of S. Peter and our Lord's answer. "Thou shalt never wash my feet." "If I wash thee not, thou hast no part in me." "Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head." There may have been some talk with the others. One would like to know what Judas said. Watch our Lord washing the feet of Judas—He does not shrink even from that; He never shrank from any work the Father gave Him to do: there is the same calm self-possession here as in all his acts. Surely these men feel that there is something more involved here than a mere washing, an act of brotherly love, telling of his union with

them. The hour was pregnant with coming events. Every word, every act, must have seemed part of the great tragedy which was developing under their eyes. Our Lord's solemn words: *What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter,* would have made them the more alert to catch hidden meanings. How eagerly they wait as he takes again his garments and sits down among them, for some word of explanation, some light to guide them to the meaning of his act.

Consider, first,

That our Lord's words to S. Peter, in the light of the future, give us a clue: *He that is bathed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit.* There is a total cleansing upon which a partial soiling may supervene, a soiling that in its turn needs to be removed, but which needs not the repetition of the bath. Our Lord must have been thinking of sin, of an entire absolution which had been the Apostles' and of some departure from its perfect cleansing which yet did not require its renewal: a lesser cleansing in this case suffices. But the lesser cleansing will do nothing for those who are not already clean. *Ye are clean, but not all:* and the washing of the part will do nothing for the one who is not clean. *For he knew who should betray him; therefore said he, ye are not all clean.* Consider, that it is this mystical cleansing that he commends to them in the future; no ceremony of foot-washing to be mechanically repeated but the ministry of that which is in acted parable set forth. The ministry of forgiveness is one that they are to perform to one another. Whatever their sins against him he washes from their soul by the gift of his pardon. So are they to do to one another. *If I then your Lord and Master*

have washed your feet, ye also, ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example that ye should do as I have done to you. Verily, verily I say unto you, the servant is not greater than his lord; neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him. If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them. Such words mark an abiding truth which must in the future embody itself in action, in practice. Forgiveness, we shall expect, will be one of the virtues most common among his disciples, and we shall expect that such forgiveness will be sacramental in its nature, that is, will convey the gift it offers.

Consider, second,

That the mutual forgiveness of offences as between Christians should be almost instinctive. There should be no grudging or withholding. There should be a willingness to offer forgiveness before there is a willingness to seek. To consider the infirmities of the weak is one of the duties that our religion lays upon us. It is very difficult to ask to be forgiven even when we most want to be; and it is the part of a whole-hearted forgiveness to show readiness to forgive. We give an added force to this readiness to forgive others when we take the matter of our relation to them to our Lord in our prayers. If we sincerely desire to forgive, we also desire that God will forgive; and some of our best prayers are those which we offer for our "enemies." It is the teaching of S. John and the constant teaching of the Church that certain sins of others may be forgiven in response to our prayers. In any case, in such prayers, we have unfolded our own minds to God and have become so far *like our Father in heaven.* Such prayers cannot fail at least to

prompt to penitence and draw to God. We need to think much and often of the communion of all the faithful in the One Body which the Church is, and of prayer as a mode of expression of the Body's life. Through prayer life touches and influences life, and by it we shape the lives of others far more than we think. How many are the feet washed by us when we give ourselves to a time of intercession for blind sinners, weak sinners, ignorant sinners, careless sinners! And especially when the offence is against ourselves one feels that the very offering of the forgiveness to God on their behalf will surely effect what it offers. This, of course, in the case of those who are *bathed,* that is, of those who are in a state to profit by such forgiveness, not the case of those who by mortal sin are separated from God.

Let us, then, pray,

For eagerness to forgive, bearing in mind the example of our Saviour. Let us pray that our own sense of the need of forgiveness may urge us to intercession for others.

O Thou most clement, Who recallest the erring, Thou most merciful, Who despisest not sinners, we rely on Thine own promise, O Lord, that Thou wilt give pardon to the penitent. May all who seek Thee find Thee. We ask it of Thy mercy, O Lord and Saviour.

The Absolution

The priest sitting in the confessional to receive the confessions of the faithful is sitting as the representative of God. It is quite true that none but God can forgive sins; but it is true in the same sense that it is true in a

democracy, that none but the people can forgive crime. There can be no dispute as to the origin of the power. The practical question is, how the power is to be exercised? As the people exercise their power of pardon through President, Governor or Pardon Board, so God exercises His power of forgiveness in certain circumstances through delegates: that is, through men commissioned to represent Him, through His priests. The absolution that they give is the absolution of God and conveys God's pardoning grace according to our Lord's commission, "Whosoever sins ye remit they are remitted unto them, and whosoever sins ye retain they are retained": a commission transmitted to all priests at their ordination.

The priest, then, sits as judge, and in order that he may exercise his office it is necessary that the whole spiritual state of the pentitent should be submitted to him. That is the reason that a detailed confession is insisted upon. A general confession, that is, a confession in general terms, affords no basis for the act of judgment. The judge has no data upon which to found a sentence, for it must not be forgotten that the priest does not by any necessity give absolution. He must, if the circumstances require, refuse it. He is bound to refuse it if he knows that the confession is invalid, or dishonest, or if there is a lack of penitence, or if the penitent refuse the conditions imposed upon him; as, for example, that he make such restitution as is directed. No doubt this aspect of the priest's power is commonly overlooked, because it is so rarely necessary to retain sin.

This is the same power that the priest exercises in suspending persons from the sacraments, or in excommunicating them. With us the discipline of the Church is so relaxed that excommunication is a rare thing. Under any

efficient administration of the discipline of the Church it would be more frequent. Fortunately, most people realize when they are in a state in which they ought not to receive the sacraments, and withdraw from them of their own volition. There are large numbers of these "dead" members of the Church scattered through the community. For such, the Church hopes and prays for renewal. It is to them a great advantage if they were brought up in the practice of confession, because in that case they know precisely what to do if the Holy Spirit draws them to repentence. One's experience is that there are many people whose instruction has been so faulty that they actually do not know how to repent. They have wandered away from their religion and are perplexed on the road back. But whoever has made his confession knows what the road is, and any priest that has heard confessions for any length of time knows how thankful such penitents are to be back. One of the great consolations of the priesthood is this receiving back of the lost; this rejoicing in the son who is found.

The absolution is not a naked sentence, a mere declaration of absolution, it is an integral part of the Sacrament of Penance, and conveys the grace of pardon. The soul of the sinner is not only declared to be restored to the favor of God, but the guilt of sin is done away. The soul is cleansed from sin by the infusion of grace, and in a case of mortal sin, through which the union with God had been broken, that union is restored, and the soul once more in the full favor and love of God.

One phase of the exercise of this power of the priest is that of the giving of counsel and advice. This is not a part of the sacrament, but is a necessity in the administration of justice, and in the guidance of the penitent to

a better life. This matter of direction is one of the most important and most difficult features of the priest's work. It is, of course, quite separable from the administration of the sacrament, and may indeed be fulfilled by the priest who is not the confessor of the person directed, and may be conducted by letter. In fact, much of the wonderful literature of the Church dealing with the spiritual life is made up of letters of direction.

Every priest is qualified to give absolution. It is a power inherent in his office, but not every priest is qualified to act as a director, that is, in cases of difficulty. While, therefore, it is the normal thing that the parish priest should be both confessor and director, it is not a necessary thing. Thus the penitent is at perfect liberty to choose his own confessor and director wherever he will.

He is at liberty so to do, but it is a liberty that he should exercise with discretion. Certainly it is the normal and orderly thing to make one's confession in one's parish church. Not to do so implies a severe criticism on one's parish priest. The only ground on which one ought to act otherwise is the refusal of the parish priest to act (as sometimes happens) or a conviction of his incompetence to deal with the particular case. What on all grounds is to be discouraged and avoided is the sentimental running about after favorite priests, commonly because they are alleged to be "sympathetic," or "understanding." Penitents who are looking after "sympathetic" directors probably need just the opposite type, need a confessor who will firmly check gossip about "spiritual" matters, which are in fact mere egotistical self-display, and who will recall the penitent to a sense of sin. The sort of penitents who really need sympathy are those humble people who do not think of seeking it,

but who come to the confessional overwhelmed with the sense of sin and failure. With such, one can be as sympathetic as one pleases.

It is unfortunate that with us there are so many priests who are wholly unqualified to act as directors. I am not at all thinking of those who, out of Anti-Catholic theory, decline to hear confessions, or those (one trusts very few) who, while willing to hear confessions if they are asked, do not themselves go to confession. I am thinking rather of the considerable class of young priests who go to confession themselves and teach their people to go, but whose education in moral theology has been so imperfect that they are unfitted to deal with any at all difficult cases. This is not wholly their fault, but the fault of the authorities of the Church, especially of those who are responsible for the indication of subjects in which candidates for Holy Orders are to be examined. The training of men for Holy Orders, as at present conducted, cannot be too severely condemned. There is very little that men are taught that fits them for their work, and the subjects which would fit them for their work are not taught at all, or are so taught that they might as well not be. From our present point of view, the subjects which are important are moral theology, casuistry, ascetic and mystical theology. I speak under correction, but I think that I am right in saying that nowhere in the Anglican Communion is there any adequate teaching given in these branches of spiritual studies. The result is that the priest faces the work of a pastor unprepared, except in so far as his experience in making his own confessions has prepared him.

Commonly, moreover, the young priest is put in a situation where it is difficult for him to supplement or

correct his education in these respects. The average man is not a student, even though he has chosen a walk in life which requires study for its full accomplishment. He finds it difficult to settle down to the routine of theological study, and the supposed necessities of his work are exposing him to continual interruptions. He finds that his parish care little about his intellectual growth. He has no contact with his bishop. The general administration of the Church wants him to be an administrator, a financier, a local representative of the central (and more and more centralized) administration. The parish wants him to be a "mixer," a "live wire," a "good fellow." He is invited to join the Country Club, and the Bridge Club, and the Masons and the Elks. He is neither invited, nor encouraged, nor desired, to be a saint by anyone with whom he has any contact. It is hardly to be expected, therefore, that he should settle down to a consistent course of study in spiritual theology with the purpose, first of his own self-discipline, and then of fitting himself to guide the discipline of others.

I say that under our conditions it is not to be expected that young priests should do these things, and therefore there is the more ground for rejoicing that there are those who do: those whose spiritual life is careful, and who are devoted to the understanding and the teaching of the Holy Catholic faith. Such are not merely content to teach confession, and to hear a few confessions at Christmas and Easter, but they are devoted to the training of the people committed to them in the ways of a holy life. They set themselves determinedly to the corrections of the defects of their education, and soon find that the most fascinating literature in all the world is the literature of the spiritual life. It is among such that

are to be found those who are competent to direct the lives of others. It is not to be expected that people will go for spiritual council, or, human nature being what it is, even for absolution, to priests who are worldly, or "good business men," or "able administrators." They wouldn't care to speak of their spiritual lives to a club man, or to their banker, or insurance agent. Why, then, should they care to "open their grief" to the same type of man because he happens to wear a round collar? They can see no reason why they should, and more than that, they cannot be induced to in any great numbers.

One consequence of that state of things is that considerable numbers of people are compelled to go out of their parishes for spiritual help. In churches where it is known that the clergy are accustomed to hear confessions there is a constant stream of people from parishes where the clergy do not, or where, while willing to do so, they lack the confidence which can only come through experience. Such unfortunate parishioners are obliged to curtail their spiritual experience and to make their confessions much less frequently than they would desire, and on that account to be so limited in their spiritual life as to find it very difficult to keep on. Such is the unfortunate case of many who move from parishes where they have had the privileges of the Catholic religion to others where such privileges are scanty, or not to be had.

But, the question is raised, why the need of directors? Are not people competent to conduct their religion without the need of outside help? Does not the exercise of direction over souls end in the subjection to an outside will, and produce a sort of spiritual invalidism? Such is a very common objection, and it is reinforced

by many weird tales of the confessional and by historical anecdote.

The patent human fact is that anything may be, and will be, abused; the confessional and direction among others. But I fancy sufficient has been written on these themes during the last four centuries to dispense me from adding to the quantity. If we were to give up everything that has been abused we should be in a perfectly poverty-stricken state. We might make a start by giving up such things as the law courts, and the institution of marriage. It is odd the way in which so many reverse their usual canons of judgment when they come to deal with religion. They would never think of dealing with a secular institution, or mode of action, as they deal with religious institutions and actions. It is considered no objection to the continuance of educational institutions that occasionally teachers run off with their pupils; nor does anyone demand the abolition of the legal profession because cases can be cited in which lawyers have given bad advice, or have gotten their clients so far under their influence as to direct the disposal of their property, but anyone who can cite similar instances in the history of the Church feels that he has a strong, indeed irrefragable argument against confession and direction.

If one passes beyond the circles in which a respectable recognition of the Ten Commandments, and a fair degree of conformity to the group ethics passes for Christianity, to the circles or individuals where Christianity is the most vital interest of life, one finds that religion has ceased to be considered as a simple and easy thing, and is recognized as an art of difficult practice, the more difficult the further one advances in it. Religion in fact, it is discovered,

while resting on certain broad affirmations, and involving certain practices to which conformity is easy, nevertheless unfolds into a system of a good deal of complexity as one goes on. The result is that the ignorant and undeveloped, if they are simple and childlike, can find in Christianity the sufficient guide and help of life; at the same time those whose moral and spiritual development is greater are not held to the level of the simple mind. They do not outgrow religion, rather they find that with their growing knowledge and experience the content of the simple primary conceptions of religion unfolds to them and they are always in the state of learners, with endless possibilities of advance open before them. Also, it is found in religion, as in all arts and sciences, that any advanced achievement requires a guide and teacher. The self-made man, in any department of life, will show evidence of the limitations of his makeup. We get at our ends best under competent direction, and this fact is not negatived by the possibility of quoting the cases of men eminent in various departments of life who are self-made. The normal case is the case of the taught.

The self-taught, I say, will show all the limitations of their teaching, and nowhere any greater than in religion. To what is the religious upset of the modern world due, except to the theory that religion not only may be, but ought to be, self-taught. The right of private judgment was the proclamation of the right, and also of the possibility, of the idividual conducting his own religious experience for himself "without anyone between his soul and God." To be sure this theory was unworkable, but has not on that account been any the less disastrous. The very persons who proclaimed the theory at once set themselves to negative it by erecting themselves into spiritual

directors of the community. There is something comic and grotesque in the assertion of the right of private judgment by such religious tyrants as Luther and Calvin and Knox. It is hardly necessary for Protestants to ransack the annals of Papacy for cases of spiritual tyranny. On the one hand men who asserted the right of private judgment as against their Protestant leaders were persecuted; on the other, the assertion led to the constant divisions of Protestantism itself, till it ended in mere spiritual anarchy. It seems, therefore, appropriate to ask, what has the plain man gained in the way of spiritual advantage by the assertion of the right of private judgment and the abolition of the "tyranny of priests" and the "debilitating practice of confession"? And the answer would seem to be, nothing whatever.

We return, then, to our thesis why guiding and training are absolutely necessary to the development of spiritual character, and that instances of what we may call "sporadic" spiritual development prove nothing to the contrary. Neither does such training tend to subject the pupil to the master, except to the same sense in which he is the subject of his secular teacher. The raw child or youth is necessarily dependent upon, and to an extent formed by his teacher, but that would seem to be what the teacher is for. A teacher imparts to his pupil a subject as it presents itself to him, and so far prepossesses and prejudices the unformed mind of the learner. There would be small wisdom in attempting to destroy such a system. Wisdom is shown in the selection of the teacher. I have already admitted that in my opinion that part of the Church in which our lot is cast is sadly deficient in the selection and training of priests. But unsatisfactory as the situation is, the present body of the

clergy are capable of dealing with everyday situations and, if not ideal, are at least no worse than others.

On the face of it, it looks as though it were true that the practice of direction produces, in certain cases at least, weakness of character and therefore that one of the objections against it stands. A little reflection, however, shows that this is not a true statement of the case. The director is merely a convenient peg upon which weak characters can hang themselves. I do not suppose that weakness of character is a monopoly of those parts of the Church in which oracular confession is practised, or indeed of the Church at all. There are weak, clinging natures everywhere and I do not imagine that the latest and most up-to-date Liberal Conventicle is free from them. In fact one gathers that to-day they haunt those modern developments of the religious sentiment, the various theosophic and healing cults, much more than they do the confessional; but in any case they are born, not made, though they may no doubt be developed.

A wise confessor or director, in dealing with such souls, will feel that they have as much, if not more claim on his time and sympathy than more robust souls. He must do what he can for them. He will not change their characters. They will remain, after he has done his best, dependent, but he will do what he can to instil a needed amount of self-reliance, to abolish scruples, to banish fear. His chief difficulty in dealing with such will be their clinging quality; their tendency to attach themselves to him rather than to God. There are those souls who cannot get on unless they feel a kind of personal attachment to their guide, whoever he may be. You see it in children devoted to a special teacher. You see it

in the disciples who gather about a master. It is the root of all "schools" in philosophy and art and literature, and is in no wise peculiar to religion. But there is this difference: The founder of a philosophic or a literary "school" is not regarded as a man of low and selfish, if not immoral, motive because of his group of disciples and his obvious influence over them. He is not criticized for teaching them his own conclusions, while all the wrath of criticism is poured out upon the unfortunate priest who has "disciples" about him, though he be not teaching them his own opinions, but the doctrines of the Catholic Church.

I do not suppose that there are many priests who take delight in the fact that they have a considerable number of penitents who are dependent upon them. I fancy most priests are sorry for such and try to guide them away from themselves to God. I fancy they find this a great strain, but the priest understands that, no more than his Lord, is he sent to the "whole." He is sent to the sick who need a physician, and one prevalent form of spiritual illness is this inability to make up one's own mind, and to hold to a purpose without the continual recurrence of doubt and hesitation. With such souls nothing ever gets settled, whether it be their repentance, or their rule of life. Questions which seemed closed fly open the next day, and what one thought had been exhaustively discussed and finally determined is presently re-opened. Such souls have a weird joy in discussing their own morbid spirituality. It is no doubt a form of the raw ego, a variety of exhibitionism. Possibly the secular teacher finds it possible to suppress or get rid of such, but it is not possible for the priest. He is com-

pelled to deal with them as best he may, to teach them to be a little less morbid, to hold a little longer to purposes, to trust more to the grace of God.

One feature of the case of such persons, the feature which more than any other sends them to the priest, is the fact that he is the only person in whom they find tolerance and sympathy. They can, of course, purchase a certain amount of these commodities from a psychologist, but they come high. Still, many are doing so today, to the great relief of the clergy. At home, however, and in the circle of their acquaintance they find little tolerance and less sympathy, so they are driven forth to seek it elsewhere. The very person who complacently and critically says, "A—— simply haunts the church, and is always hanging about to speak to Father X——," is very likely the person who, by lack of intelligent dealing, has driven A—— to Father X——, and shifted the burden upon him. He takes it up as a part of his sacrifice as a priest and very likely as his reward gets the reputation of always "having a lot of weak, spineless people hanging about him." Well, there are many stations on the Way of the Cross, and not the least painful of these is the necessity of bearing unreasoning and unintelligent criticism.

Directors, no doubt, ought to avoid the production of spiritual invalidism, and yet invalids, spiritual as well as others, have a right to aid, and the aim is constructive: to build and maintain a strongly developed spiritual life. The director is not concerned primarily with weak and dependent people who have no wills and want to have their minds made up for them. His chief concern and great usefulness is in the guidance of souls of great spiritual possibilities in the way of sanctity. The process of ad-

justing the average human life, especially under contemporary conditions, to the requirements of a developed spiritual experience is not an easy one. It requires thought and skill and infinite patience in dealing with detail. It attempts to get the maximum of result from the circumstance of a given life. Obviously this cannot be done in some offhand and rough and ready fashion, nor is mere amateur experiment apt to be more successful.

Looking at the problem of direction from the side of the person directed it is first of all to be considered whether direction is needed. Fortunately there are a great many well-disposed Christians quite regular in their lives, receiving in a normal routine the Sacraments, who never fall into mortal sin, and are quite content with their confessions and the ordinary commonplace advice that is there given them. They are good, solid folk, rather of the "tough-minded" class, the backbone of the average congregation. I do not think I am doing them any injustice, and do not in the least mean to imply any criticism, if I say that they do not aspire to advanced spiritual experience. Their needed direction is but occasional, and they can find the sort of advice they want without difficulty. But there are others who are inspired by spiritual ambition, who want to develop to the furthest capacity the spiritual powers of which they have become conscious. The love of God burns within them and they are forever unsatisfied with the degree of their spiritual accomplishment. Their souls restlessly seek rest in God.

It is souls of this class that seek direction, and to whom, for many reasons, direction is necessary. It is necessary to counteract their unwisdom and inexperience. They vaguely know what they want, but they are apt to

blunder sadly in the attempt to get it. No physician will turn a patient loose in a medicine closet to pick out anything he thought might help him, still less would he recommend all people to buy a treatise on medicine and find out for themselves what is their illness, or if they are ill at all. And yet that is what people are recommended to do when they are advised to dispense with directors. It is what priests do who preach the Christian life and leave people without opportunity of confession and direction. It is what they do who simply turn people loose in a library of pious books.

Take the case of a person who has been somewhat spiritually weakened—let us say a woman, who has been either indifferent or routine. Something occurs to turn her attention to religion as a vital personal concern. If she has thought of religion at all it has rather been as a set of rules which she was expected to follow, or as a number of negative precepts that she was to avoid breaking. It now appears that religion is something far more vital than that, and she begins to grope about to find what it is. She has never made her confession. Her acquaintance with her rector is limited to having him to dinner once a year. What is her probable course? She will think of a friend who is "very religious." The chances are that the friend will lend her a book, probably the last pious book she has been reading. We can imagine the poor woman going home and resolutely sitting down to read, and speedily to get lost in, the pages of "Holy Wisdom" or "The Devout Life." It is all pretty unfamiliar ground, and is it any wonder that one thing that is advised looks about as impossible as another? But she is in dead earnest, so she selects some points that she thinks she can undertake, and starts in. The

chances are very good that she will find the whole attempt impossible and after a while give it up. She will probably lapse back into her former state, with a feeling that she has tried religion and found out that there is nothing in it but imagination and nerves.

Investigation of what she had attempted would show, first, that she had been given a book for which she was utterly unprepared, which plunged her into a world of which she had no experience, and in which she had no guide. Second, that with the best intentions she had seized upon some things to attempt which were quite unfitted for her in her present stage of spiritual development. Very likely she was trying to apply to her case some advice that was intended for Religious in an advanced stage of sanctity. Nothing but failure could be expected to follow from such a course.

How different the result might have been if the aspirant had been promptly guided to the care of a competent priest for her direction. He would have understood her spiritual immaturity. He would have felt that two things were vital at this point: to arouse her to prayer, and to bring her to make her first confession. He would have seen to her preparation. He would have heard her first confession, and then he would have been in a position to advise her further, and she would have been in a position to act intelligently. The suggested actions would have been appropriate to her state of life and to her spiritual capacity. Raw experiments would have been avoided.

Certainly one of the things that test most searchingly the capacity of the director is the opportuneness of his advice, his understanding of what is desirable, not in the abstract, but for this person at this time. To judge of

this requires that the director know the life and circumstance of the penitent; know the penitent well enough to discern temperamental tendencies and temptations. He must know just what to check and just what to foster in this case. There is nothing more hopeless of good results than the attempt to direct before one knows; to impose general principles without knowledge of the temperament by which they are to be applied. Direction, as distinguished from advice in a special case, can only be fruitful where all the terms of the problem one is dealing with are fully known. Amateur work here may easily result in permanent disaster. The priest who lacks sound education and some experience would do well to attempt very little direction. Of course he can only learn through experience, but he needs to acquire the experience before he attempts to apply it.

Those who wish to place themselves under the guidance of a skilled director would do well to be perfectly clear in their minds what it is that they want. Let them not dream of some distant heights of holiness which they are presently to scale, but let them fix their minds on what is the next step for them. Advance in holiness is commonly quite devoid of any romantic element. The aspirant will find himself brought down to the quite commonplace task of getting rid of an habitual venial sin, or attempting to acquire a deeper attention in prayer, or making a more careful thanksgiving after Communion. The director will not start in by teaching him "contemplative prayer." He will be much more likely to insist on his saying the Our Father with a better attention. The first step will always be, not to adopt something new, but to examine whether the old and accustomed have yet been done with such competence that it is possible to go be-

yond them. Thoroughness of accomplishment, rather than spiritual ambition, is the watchword of the director.

And this insistence upon perfection in elemental accomplishment will soon test whether the aspirant for direction is a romantic soul seeking spiritual novelties, or a determined soul seeking a deep life of union with God. The latter are the souls that can profit by direction, and need it. They can profit because of their love of God and zeal for His glory. They need it because of their lack of experience in the way they must go. "The Way." That was the earliest designation of the Christian religion. Christians themselves were called "wayfarers." Life was conceived as a way leading to God, that straight and narrow way of which our Lord spoke. Those who find it in this sense of a seeking for holiness are not many, but they are the salt of the earth and the light of the world. The happiest accomplishments of the priest's life are his successes in aiding them.

THE SIXTEENTH MEDITATION

THE COMFORTABLE WORDS

For the origin of the *Comfortable Words* we must again look to the Lutheran book, Hermann's *Consultation*. Five sentences are there provided, three of them identical with ours, and the minister, instead of reciting all, is to use any one of them.

Let us listen to the words of S. John:

If any man sin we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ, the Righteous, and He is the propitiation for our sin.

Let us try to picture:

THE taking down of our Lord from the Cross. Here would seem to be the end of one more attempt of God to rouse and raise humanity. It would be with sad and burdened hearts that the few who remained to the end would have received the Body of the Lord from the Roman authorities and borne it away to Joseph's tomb. Try to see that little company bearing the Body of Jesus to the place where *there was a garden, and in the garden a new sepulchre.* Were there any of the Twelve there, recovered from their fright? S. John —yes, most likely; though it may be too that he had led away the blessed Mother. None of the Twelve is mentioned; and what one actually sees is a few faithful ones—Joseph of Aramathea and Nichodemus with the Body, and the women who follow, Mary Magdalene and "the other Mary." They abide to the end; they perhaps feel in some dim way that it is not the end. There is a certain obstinacy in love which will not believe until its last hold is wrenched away. To the men it had become clear that Jesus was dead, and the Adventure—wonderful while it lasted—over. They with whatever disappointment would turn back and take up the old life.

Simon Peter saith unto them, I go a fishing. They say unto him, we also go with thee. But to the women the adventure had not been the important thing, but Jesus. If the hopes fixed on Him are shattered the Apostles can begin life anew; but the women cannot so easily gather the fragments of their broken lives. So they will not accept the finality of the sealed tomb, but abide, sitting over against the Sepulchre. The sun goes down, and the shadows gather, and still we see them there—watching.

Consider, first,

That the tragedy which the women have watched from the beginning to this end is not the failure of God but the success of God. The clinging impulse of love which forbids that the women shall even now give up all hope and go back to Jerusalem is a true instinct. Through the Crucifixion, the death, the burial, God has been pushing on His plan for the conquest of sin and the deliverance of humanity from its guilt and power to a successful conclusion by the only path through which success was possible—the path of sacrifice. And this darkest moment is the moment of triumph; the pause of the tomb is the moment of silence before the shout of victory which shall attend the Resurrection morning. If love is to win man—and in the end love will win man—there must be a complete demonstration of its limitlessness, of its shrinking from no sacrifice for its objects. The doubting, feeble, faithless objects of our Lord's love must be convinced in a way that cannot be gainsaid that *having loved His own He loved them unto the uttermost.* Such is the darkness of the human heart that it will not respond to anything less than the full revela-

tion of the love of the Father. And it is this self-stripping of God of all other tokens of His Divinity that throws into splendid isolation the one unassailable proof of that Divinity—His measureless love. *God so loved the world that He gave his only begotten Son to the end that all that believe in Him should not perish but have everlasting life;* and it cannot be that humanity in the end will fail to understand that love and respond to it. Our hope for the world lies there in our indestructible conviction that such love cannot abide without full fruitage. Whatever evidence the world may give of its heartlessness, its disbelief, its indifference to the Divine Sacrifice, we remain sitting over against the Sepulchre, waiting, with hearts which refuse to be discouraged, the burst of glory which shall tell of the success of God and a converted world.

Consider, second,

That the love of God has not been altogether fruitless. The history of Christianity is the history of a partial response. And in particular, our own Christian lives are the evidence of our own response. Whatever may be the short-coming of those lives, it is of the last importance that we should hold fast to their grounds of hope and encouragement, the revelation of the limitless love of God manifested in the life of Jesus Christ. *We* fail; we fail over and over again; but God does not fail. He abides faithful to the promises made in His Son. *We* are discouraged; over and over again we feel the will relax under the stress of the discovery of our own weakness and incapacity; but God is not discouraged; He offers Himself anew as the unfailing resource of our failing wills. His word abides in promise, in offer.

in cheer. We can hardly open our New Testaments without coming on some stimulating word of God which seems to have been spoken for our personal heartening; some offer of remedy which applies to our special case. It is the wonder of the Bible that no possible human experience escapes it or is left unexplained. Have we learned to use our Bibles as the textbook of human experience? Have we succeeded in finding there both ourselves and God? God seeking, sacrificing, loving the self which if it too would seek and sacrifice would lose itself in that inexhaustible love? God gave Himself that you might find Him, and finding Him find peace in Him. When the sense of your failure comes do you betake yourself to the strength of God? In the hour of your weakness do you place yourself in the everlasting arms, and by the prayer of self-surrender, lose your feeling of isolation and find the nearness of God? When pain and grief overwhelm, do you remember those hours of darkness which for those who had followed our Lord and fixed their hopes on him succeeded his Passion, and in the light of their experience, take your place in the garden, over against the Sepulchre, and wait the coming of the Resurrection Morning?

Let us, then, pray,

For grace to rely more completely on the promises of God. Pray for unyielding hope amid all the discouragement and distresses of life.

O God, Who makest all things profitable to those who love Thee, grant to our hearts an invincible power of love, that the desires which have been conceived by Thy inspiration may not be changed by any temptation; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

The Comfortable Words

As one has come to understand the Christian doctrine of original sin one can easily comprehend the great emphasis laid upon sin and repentance in the revelation of God's mind for man contained in Holy Scripture and handed down in the theology of the Christian Church. From the point of view of much modern speculation, and especially from the point of view of "liberal religion," this emphasis is unintelligible, save as the phenomenon of a very imperfect state of religious development. Liberalism largely dispenses with the notions of sin and salvation. It regards men as imperfectly developed (at least our ancestors were) but on the right track and progressing rapidly. Whatever they may now be, their future state will inevitably be an advance on this and however imperfect they may now be we cannot think of their conduct as sin in the formally accepted sense of that term.

To be sure the jubilant shouts over the rapid progress of the race to a soon to be attained millennium have died down. The critics of the conception of indefinite human progress are no longer silenced with cries of "pessimists." There is a chastened note, even in the most Liberal circles. The conception of progress is being subjected to very severe and searching criticism in the very house of its friends; but as yet there is little sign of any recurrence to the Christian notion of sin as being precisely what is the matter with the world. The world, as recognized on all sides, is in a most distressing state. Our very complex civilization is in danger of falling about our ears. The very fact of its complexity makes it all the more difficult to sustain. There is much

clamor of alarm. There are many plans of salvation offered. Men, looking for a Saviour, are crying, lo! here, and lo! there. The one thing that is conspicuous by its absence is the note that was struck in another era of crisis—the note that was struck on the banks of the Jordan, "Prepare the way of the Lord. Make His paths straight": the note that rang out in Galilee, "The time is fulfilled and the Kingdom of God is at hand. Repent ye and believe the Gospel."

However remote it may seem of execution, this nevertheless is the only progress in which there is the least hope of success. If we are to survive socially we must repent and turn to a new social program, which is yet the old program of the Jordan and of Galilee and which still, after nineteen hundred years, waits its accomplishment. Men talk of the failure of the Gospel. It has not failed! Wherever, and in so far as it has been tried, it has succeeded. So far as men acted on it it succeeded socially during the Middle Ages. It has succeeded in myriads of individual lives all through the centuries. If Western society can be saved to-day it can only be saved by the adoption of the Gospel of Christ as a social program. Christian men and women have got to learn that the Gospel of Christ is not a private religion, a religion of select individuals, but a social religion, a Kingdom of God capable of regenerating the world. Our pitiful attempts at being Christians in our individual lives, and being anything else in our social lives, have brought us to social disaster. There is, it may be, still time for repentance. But it is repentance and not social nostrums that we need.

We need it because we are sinners—social sinners—because we have been content to think we could be saved

in isolation: that we could have a private religion which would take care of our own souls and that we need not care for the souls of our brethren. We need repentance because we have been content to live in a world of lust, and greed, and oppression, with no effective protest, so long as we ourselves were well fed and comfortable. We have emasculated the Gospel of Jesus of its fire, and energy, and social force, and reduced it to an innocuous system of good advice. We have sat down complacently in a state of Christendom which violates the declared will of God and acquiesced in divisions that could be healed, had we really wanted them healed. We have talked about "the Churches" and "the branches of the Church" and "National Churches" as though these phrases represented some normal state of Christendom and not a defiance of the will of God. There is nowhere that we can turn, religiously or socially, and not see the reproachful eyes of God looking into our eyes, and hear the voice of the Incarnate saying, "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish."

The need of repentance, individually and socially, must be realized, the awful fact of our sin. It ought to be obvious that there can be no spiritual advance without that. It is strange how we hate to repent socially. We will come one by one and say, "I have sinned against Heaven and before Thee"; but the acknowledgment that we have been utterly wrong socially as a nation or community comes hard. But it is as necessary for nations to repent as for individuals, and the need is pressing for the penalties are here and now. A nation has no immortality, but a nation repents when its members repent and turn from their sin that they may be saved.

Now individually and socially we are often ready to

offer a half repentance. We are ready to say we will behave differently in the future; we will reform; we will turn over a new leaf; but all that isn't repentance. Turning a new leaf does not blot out what was written on the old one. Repentance is not forgetting those things that are behind, it is setting right those things that are wrong. There is no true repentance where there is no restitution.

It is because, among other things, of this human tendency to turn our backs upon the disaster we have made, the ruin we have caused, and to attempt to make some sort of a new state independent of the past, that the Christian religion so stresses the reconstructive element in repentance. We have no right simply to turn our backs and walk away from the wrong from which we are responsible. If we have wronged our brother we must set right the wrong; and we must do our best to set right the wrongs of the social order in which we are implicated. We cannot guiltlessly take up the Cain cry, "Am I my brother's keeper?" We cannot escape our responsibility as members of the social order. Repentance and restoration are the first steps to a new order. Understanding of the ills of the present, opening our eyes wide to the needs of our brethren, these are our obligations to-day. We are allied with some social group; we see through the eyes of that group: we have no right to take what we thus see as the whole truth. We have no right to conclude that the assumptions of the group are true; we must examine all in the light of the Gospel.

When we have faced facts; when we have made our self-examination; when we have acknowledgel ourselves sinners; then there is hope. Then have we the right to turn hopefully to the promises of God. But let me

emphasize, if it so be, overmuch: we have no right to the comfort of those promises until we have fulfilled the condition of repentance. If society turns eagerly to the principles of the Gospel, then may it hope. If the individual sinner turns from his sin, then may he hope. Hope comes when we have set our feet firmly in the way of repentance.

By one side of it, that way is the Way of the Cross. It is a way of difficulty and pain, and would we have it otherwise? If we have attained to a true repentance: if we have seen sin in the light of the purity of God: if our own lives have stood out in our self-examinations in naked contrast with the ideals we have claimed that we are following; then there can be no doubt of the pain, and no shrinking from the uttermost of it. We face the truth that we have been misusing life, that we have turned our powers, God-given though they were, to a purely selfish use. We have tried to get out of life what God has not put into it. We now understand that what we have been doing was struggling against the will of God, trying to thwart that will, to mis-shape life to our own interest, and the consequence of all that now comes back to us. We see as the consequence of sin—of our sin, for we cannot hide in a crowd—a Man going forth bearing a Cross to the place of His torture. That Cross, we understand, that He is there bearing, is *our* Cross. It would not be there, and He would not be about to be nailed to it, save for our sins. He has no sin. There is no reason why He should carry the Cross, save that He chose to do so for our salvation. How then shall we not run to His aid? How then shall we shrink from any pain which can associate us with Him? We, too, as we see, are signed with the cross, for the Way

of the Cross is to us the way of salvation. We are eager to bear it because we know that Christ did not bear the Cross in order that we might not bear it, but He bore it in order that we might know how to bear it. Its pain must be ours before we can share in its triumph.

Even so, O Cross! thine is the victory.
Thy roots are fast within our fairest fields;
Brightness may emanate in Heaven from thee,
Here thy dread symbol only shadow yields.

Of reaped joys thou art the heavy sheaf
Which must be lifted, though the reaper groan;
Yea, we may cry till Heaven's great ear be deaf,
But we must bear thee, and must bear alone.

Vain were a Simon; of the Antipodes
Our night not borrows the superfluous day.
Yet woe to him that from his burden flees,
Crushed in the fall of what he cast away.

It is a widely prevalent feeling, holding many people back from any attempt at an advance in Christian experience, that the way of discipline and penitence necessarily takes from life all comfort and joy. They picture the earnest Christian as cut off from all that makes life tolerable and going in a state of depression all his life long. That easily made blunder is of course due to concentration of thought upon what a Christian gives up, and failure to estimate what he gains. If a Christian experience brings nothing into life, then there is much force in the criticism made upon it; but the contrary is the case. The acquisitions of the Christian are far beyond his losses.

In close relation with the call of God to repentance there are certain promises which are made to those who heed this call of God. The Christian not only takes these promises seriously, but speedily finds them to be the basis of a deepening experience. Let us look at that group of promises which we have come to know as "the Comfortable Words." For our purposes we will disregard the order in which they are set out in the Communion Office.

There is the fundamental statement that Christ Jesus is "the propitiation for our sins." We need not here insist upon the nature of sin and the obstacle that it is to our approach to God. What we are concerned with now is that life is tremendously enriched and enlightened by this announcement. If Columbus, when he sailed upon his quest, could have been assured of its success, and have known that he was opening to the Old World all the treasures of the New, how wonderfully his task would have been lightened, and how many anxious days he would have been saved. We, when we enter upon the way of penitence, know what the end is. The forgiveness of sins is not problematical. We are not in doubt until we have reached the end whether sin can be forgiven. One can imagine a person who does not believe in our Lord nevertheless being overwhelmed by a sense of sinfulness. A man has perhaps committed some great sin, and is depressed by the sense of it, and wonders whether there be any escape. He believes in "natural religion" and he looks about him in the natural world for comfort. He finds one inevitable law written there, the law of cause and effect, which admits of neither repentance nor reparation. "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he reap." He may cry as he will in his agony of remorse, "but there is no voice, or any to answer"

in the only world that he knows. He may faintly hope and go softly all his days in his sorrow, but there is nothing for him to lay hold upon.

How different it is with the Christian! He becomes conscious of sin with a much deeper consciousness of it than any other can have because he alone understands the true nature of sin, that it is a wound to the love of God. But it is not an irreparable wound. God in His infinite mercy has opened a fountain for sin and uncleanliness, where all the guilt of sin may be washed away. The blood of Jesus Christ cleanses from all sin. He is the propitiation, an offering for sin, which opens an approach for our souls to God, the very God Whom we have wounded by our sins. That is the wonder of it! That the very God Whom we have wounded by sin offers Himself as the means of sin's forgiveness.

Looked at from this angle, then, the way of penitence is the way of approach. Whatever its roughness, it is still a road leading the wanderer home; and more than that, it is not altogether true to say that we find God at the end of the road. Really we find Him at the beginning. It is He Himself who inspires our repentance. It is He Himself who takes our hand and leads us on the Way. That first confession that we made with such difficulty—that was the deep expression of our dawning sense of what sin is and what God is; that was the outcome of our first clear vision of self in all our nakedness. It was the gateway to the Way of the Cross. Ever since we have been walking on that road, but at the very gate as we entered, our Lord met us and has been walking the Way with us ever since. His was the hand that reached out to support us when we stumbled. His was the strength that sustained us when we were

faint. When we were very weary and exhausted He Himself was the tonic that revived us. It was His Body and Blood that poured strength into our fainting souls. It is this that carries us on. Let the road be what it may we can travel it, and travel it with joy, if we are conscious of the friend at the side: if we can close our eyes and see the Face.

> This is your road—a painful road and drear.
> I made the stones that never give you rest.
> I set your friend in pleasant ways and clear,
> And he shall come, like you, unto My breast.
> But you, my child, must travel here.
>
> This is your task. It has no joy nor grace,
> But 'tis not meant for any other hand.
> And in My universe hath measured place,
> Take it,—I do not bid you understand.
> I bid you close your eyes and see My face.

The faith that can go on then in the strength of vision; the faith that confides in the propitiation that has been made, is the faith that lightens all the way before our feet. Our soul has been relieved of the burden of guilt. What does it matter that for a while we are asked to pay the penalty, to make the partial restoration which is the temporal penalty of sin? Are we not rather glad to share thus in the work, and to take our part in the process of sanctification? It stimulates us thus to be called to partnership with God; to feel that we are working out our own salvation all the time that He worketh in us both to will and to do. Self-righteousness is the outcome of separating our work from the work of God. So long as we feel that we are working with God, and by virtue of

the strength that He bestows upon us, the result is not self-righteousness, but humility.

Through the propitiation made by Jesus Christ for our sins we are assured, if we fail Him not, of Heaven. Again, not some final salvation, but *now* are we saved. We are placed by the grace of God in a state of salvation, or, as it is otherwise called, in a state of grace. "Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners." He saves sinners by forgiving their sins when they repent, and by taking them into union with Himself, that from being sinners they may become saints. The negative state of being forgiven is not enough. We need the positive state of growth in grace. The sign of our spiritual vitality is our growth. Stagnation is to relapse into spiritual death. Someone has said that there are many Christians who are content with a very modest patrimony so far as concerns spiritual things, and that is such a pity, for we have a very rich Father Who wants to bestow the gifts of the spirit abundantly. "It grieves His Divine Spirit," says Blosius, "to see us content with the lowest things, when He is ready to bestow on us the highest. For He desires to give Himself to us in the most excellent way."

After the storms of repentance it is so sweet to rest in the promises of God. There are, no doubt, still the long, swelling waves which are the effects of the storm that has passed. There are, too, renewed bursts of storm-wind, reminding us that Nature never passes into a state of perpetual rest. There are gusts of passion, of passion we had hoped was dead. There are uprisings of the senses; revolts of the carnal nature; storms of spiritual revolt, of pride and of anger; but when we are safe in the everlasting arms all these are but reminders of our

frailty; warnings to keep watch and guard rather than actual disaster. As the storm recedes we hear it muttering in the distance; but all about us the sun shines. It seems the more splendid because of the storm that has passed. So we emerge from temptation with an added sense of the grace and goodness of God and of His care for us.

All this brings a deep happiness into the way we are following. We understand the experience of the first Christians as we study their writings, and perceive how greatly their joy was a joy of escape. They are conscious of the time of the old evil life, lying in the background, from which they have come out. Their life is not now an easy life, but there is laughter and lightheartedness in them. They go now to meet their trial with a sense of what they have won. We are apt to undervalue what has come to us without effort, but what has cost us, we deeply value. And we value our religion, our spiritual experience, I think, in proportion to the effort we have put into the acquisition of it. There are so many souls whom we think fortunate because they have never been tried as we, and we are tempted to envy their serenity; but it is never wise to trust an untried strength, and the trials we have had to meet have tested us, and tried us even as the silver is tried. And we have emerged from the trial immensely strengthened, with a strength that we can trust. What God asks us to endure is the measure of His trust in us. All along the way that the Christian follows in imitation of his Divine Master there are means of refreshment. We drink of the brook in the way. "Come unto Me," our Lord invites, "all ye that travail and are heavy laden and I will refresh you." He gives us that refreshing drink of which He speaks so

often and so enticingly. We catch a glimpse of Him on that "great day of the feast," standing and crying, "If any man thirst, let him come unto Me, and drink." We hear His words to the woman of Samaria, "If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, give me to drink; thou wouldst have asked of Him and He would given thee living water." Our trouble is that we so often seek the water of which whosoever drinketh shall thirst again. We look, weary and heavy-laden as we are, to the material gifts of this life for comfort and support. We seek distractions. We seek for a moment to forget the weariness and the fret.

There is an infinite tragedy in the life of to-day with its wide assumption that Christianity has failed. There is no triumph of the devil so complete as that which persuades men that Christianity is played out; that there is no help to be found in the religion of the Cross. Over the door of a city church our Lord hangs crucified. All day and all night the stream of traffic passes by. Very rarely is there any eye raised to the figure which hangs above the door, embodying the promises of God for salvation of men. All day and all night He continually cries, "Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by?" Obviously it is nothing, less than nothing. And yet the pity of it! How many weary and dragging lives pass there in the shadow of the Cross! How many lives that are conscious of failure and of sin! What multitudes might find help and comfort. But no, they have been persuaded that Christianity is a failure. They think it has been proved that there is no help there. So they go their way, empty souls, vaguely longing for help and not knowing where to find it.

More or less are we all like that in our partial accept-

ance of Jesus. We hold back a part of our lives. One studies the Church member, the fairly regular communicant; one studies one's own history, and one finds the same withholding, the same partial surrender of self to the Saviour. "Come unto Me!" He cries, and we think we come. We come with our self-offering, but we "hold back part of the price." We foolishly imagine that we can bargain with Him who gave all for us. We try to effect some sort of a compromise. Perhaps we have a foolish dream that Christ will bear for us the weariness of the burden, and give to us the fulness and joy of life. We like to share our worry and our pain, but we will keep our joys to ourselves.

Not thus can we deal with life. There is no compromise with the Christ. If we have not surrendered all, we have surrendered nothing. What Jesus offers to redeem and sanctify is not some fragment of life but ourselves wholly. What He offers to share with us is our whole life-experience. He will receive us on no other terms than those of complete surrender. How can it be otherwise? How can his great gift of rest come to a "divided life"? Rest means that all that divides life is unified, all that disturbs life is stilled. Rest means that we have surrendered ourselves completely to the sacrificing love of Jesus. It means that we have succeeded in abandoning our wills to Him. The weariness and the labor that we bring to Him are the weariness and labor of attempting to manage life results apart from Him and without reference to Him. It means that we have got to the end of our resources and are convinced of our own incompetence to deal with our problems.

So Jesus waits for us with the infinite patience of God. He watches from His Cross the crowds stream by. He

sees the boy and girl so very sure of themselves, so certain of their ability to manage life without help, so clear that they "know their way about": watches them with eyes that pity and understand. He sees the man who is utterly immersed in material interests, who has no time to think of any other world. He sees that for all of them the years of success and the years of failure lead to the same end,—emptiness of soul. Will they in time find the truth of life and come to God through the Door, and kneel in the confessional and cast the weary load upon Him?

And the world that they make up, this vast tragedy of egotism and greed, which is still sometimes called "Christian civilization," will that sometime discover that what it was meant to be was the Kingdom of God? Will that repent and come back, or is it too late? Has the bell tolled and sunk into silence; has the sentence, the irrevocable sentence of God, been passed? Who can say? All that we can say is that

> Still above them all one Figure stands
> With outstretched hands.

We go on in the gathering dark, clinging to the comfort of this word, "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, to the end that all that believe in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Yes, that is what we cling to, that is the anchor that holds our lives firm on the journey; and we find, do we not? that this is not a promise that beckons from the distance, a distance which seems always to recede as we approach to it; it is not a drug to keep us quiet amid the disasters of life. No, Jesus Christ came to confer on us the priceless gift of eternal life now, that we might now enjoy it,

and in enjoying it have a foretaste of the life of Heaven. Everlasting life is not immortality. It is the life of the Christian now, his life of union with the Redeemer. "Now are we Sons of God," the Apostle triumphantly cries. Now, here, we enter on the inheritance. There is no more fatal mistake that we can make than the mistake of assuming that all that Christ promises has to do with the far and doubtful future. That the promises of the Gospel are fulfilled in a future life. That, no doubt, would make the Christian life meaningless for all except a few dreamers. But no, the gift, whatever may be its future possibilities, whatever potentialities may be hidden within it, is a present gift, the gift of Himself that Christ Jesus makes to the faithful. Everlasting life is that life hid with Christ in God, which is the significant thing in the experience of the Christian now. It is that supernatural vitality which enables him to face with cheerfulness and joy all the demands that His Redeemer makes upon Him. It is this that so changes his outlook, that what to others seems a very grey existence, without pleasure and without excitement, is to him full of light and joy. "How much you have given up; how much you miss," the world pityingly says. A small boy beating a drum and blowing a horn no doubt feels a thrill of ecstasy and pities his elders because they are too old "to have any fun in life." There are things that we leave behind and forget in the joy of pressing forward to another sphere of accomplishment. The pity of the world is quite wasted upon the Christian.

For one by one the Christian brings the promises of God to the test of experience. He finds in Him propitiation and salvation. He experiences His rest, and enters upon everlasting life. What a wonderful and varied

life it is, this Christian life! We look back, it may be, to a distant day when we stood hesitating upon the threshold, wondering if we had the strength to undertake it, our eyes drawn lingeringly back to what we were giving up. And then we made the plunge of a full and complete acceptance. We entered upon the experience of the sacramental life, and we found that that experience, of which we had but a vague glimpse, opened out in endless richness and variety. The spiritual life—how without content that phrase was, when we made our Act of Faith and pushed out into the deep, turning our eyes from the shore to the tossing vast of the unknown before us. The spiritual life—what splendor of ideal and of accomplishment has been found in our pursuit of it along the Narrow Way. And still to-day, after all the years of experience, it spreads before us, inexhaustible. We have come to understand something of its marvels, and we have learned, too, to understand that it is inexhaustible. All the ages of eternity will find us rejoicing in the fulness of God.

THE SEVENTEENTH MEDITATION

THE SURSUM CORDA

With the *Sursum Corda,* "Lift up your hearts," we come to another, and the most vital, part of the Mass, the Canon. At present, in all missals, Anglican or Roman, it is customary to call the beginning of the actual prayer of Consecration the beginning of the Canon. But it really begins with the *Sursum Corda,*—or rather with the greeting "The Lord be with you," which precedes the "Lift up your hearts." This section of dialogue, ending with the *Sanctus,* has come down from the most primitive days and is common to all liturgies. Following our Lord's action at the Last Supper, when He took bread and wine and gave thanks, the Canon of the Mass, in all rites, is really a long prayer, or series of prayers of *Thanksgiving;* and here, at the very beginning, this note of thanksgiving comes out. "Lift up your hearts." "Let us give thanks. . . ." "It is very meet, right and our bounden duty that we should . . . give thanks." Hence comes one of the names for the Mass, the Holy Eucharist or Thanksgiving. The importance of this beginning of the Canon is emphasized by the solemn and beautiful music to which the words are sung. The opening greeting, "The Lord be with you," and its response were retained in the First Prayer Book but were dropped in 1552. It is now proposed to restore them, bringing this part of our rite back to its ancient form.

Let us listen to the words of Elizabeth and Mary:

And she spake out with a loud voice, and said, "Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb. And whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For, lo, as soon as the voice of thy salutation sounded in mine ears, the babe leaped in my womb for joy. And blessed is she that believed: for there shall be a performance of those things which were told her from the Lord." "And Mary said, My soul doth magnify the Lord."

Let us picture:

THE Visitation. In the meeting of these two women we read the experience of the deepest of all human joys—the joy of motherhood. God has intervened in their lives to bring to them this supreme happiness. To Elizabeth after she had long given up the hope of maternity He has given a son; and upon that son about to be born He has bestowed a vocation to be the fulfiller of prophecy and the herald of the Messiah. "He shall go before the Lord in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord." To Mary, still more wonderfully, has a Son been given, whose "name shall be called Jesus, God with us." So we see them on this day rejoicing together with a pure and holy joy; sharing the secrets of their hopes and fears, drawn to communi-

cate them to each other by the fact of their choice by God to be the medium of his action on the world. In Elizabeth there is the joy of election; but in Mary, in addition to the joy of election there is the deep happiness and peace which spring from a great act of self-surrender. Her response to the heavenly Messenger, "Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it unto me according to thy word," had been the response of a faith complete enough to fit her to be the instrument of God's purpose—had been the response of a selfless submission to the will of God. God's response to such abandonment of self to his will is that the soul shall be filled with the sense of his presence. And Elizabeth said: "Whence is this that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For, lo, as soon as the voice of thy salutation sounded in mine ears, the babe leaped in my womb for joy." And Mary said: "My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour."

Consider, first,

That the joy of these holy women is the joy of finding themselves the objects of God's choice. The children whom they are to bear are, what the name soon to be given to one of them signifies, the gifts of God. Their mothers will receive them as such, with reverent joy, and rear them in the light of their high vocation. They do not at all know what the vocation of God implies for their sons; they will be content with the knowledge that they know God's will, and will go on faithfully in obedience to it, awaiting its unfolding in the future. Elizabeth, no doubt, went to her grave with joy, all unknowing of the meaning of the prophetic message of the angel. Dreams, no doubt, she wove about the mys-

terious words so long as her life lasted—dreams which would have been fashioned and colored by the messainic hope which was the inheritance of her people; dreams, it may be, of a great career and noble success. Whatever the dreams contained we may be certain that they did not contain the announcement of the Lamb of God, the defiance of the wicked king, the death in a dungeon. She died with her hope still radiant and her dream unbroken. With Mary it was otherwise. She was to watch the perfect childhood pass into the splendid maturity; and then to see the mystery deepen, the clouds gather, the Cross rise. She was to feel the sword pierce her soul. But through it all the faith which had accepted the vocation to the divine motherhood was able also to accept the vocation of the Mater Dolorosa, and was rewarded by the final revelation that the Child she had borne in her womb and nourished at her breast, was "declared the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead." She passed from the mystery of her motherhood through the mystery of her suffering to the unfolding of God's dealings with her in that she had given of her substance to clothe the Person of God the Son with the robe of humanity. And in each stage of her deepening experience there was contained the revelation of a new and deeper joy.

Consider, second,

That joy is a spiritual quality, the gift of God the Holy Ghost; and that joy for us too deepens with the deepening of our experience of God. Our first joys in religion were most likely without much depth or permanence. They were reactions from our first contacts with spiritual reality, and were, it may be, soon obliterated by

the friction of other elements in our diversified experience. God revealed Himself as the sun reveals itself through the clouds, in flashes of light. There was a ray of His Presence which lighted our prayers for a moment and then left us to struggle with a sense of spiritual weakness and ineffectualness. There were moments of inner warmth when our souls glowed in the consciousness of the divine nearness, but that too passed away and left us once more cold. But if we persisted in the faith that life has a definite meaning and that God is guiding us to a fuller knowledge of Himself, if our eye was watchful and our heart attentive, we found that the deeper, harder, sadder experiences of life as they enfolded us and tried us, had in the heart of them a revelation of a divine meaning that was so deep that it could only be made known to deeps in us. Then we stretched out our souls and felt the assuring clasp of a hand in the darkness and were able to walk down into the very Valley of the Death-shade undismayed. As when hand closes hard with hand and love touches love a thrill passes from one to the other so a thrill of joy came to us from the touch of God. The joy of our divine birth passed into the joy of our Cross-bearing and we emerged at length from the darkness of Calvary to see the glorious dawn of the Resurrection breaking on the morning of the Third Day. That is the normal Christian experience; and let it console us, if we have not yet attained its fulness, that to those who are faithful the promise is that at even-tide there shall be light. And the walk through the Valley, too, is not without its own peculiar joy, the joy which comes from willing acceptance of the will of God. "Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word."

Let us, then, pray,

For the joy which comes from the gift of ourselves to God. Let us pray to learn to lift our hearts to God that he may filll them with joy and peace in believing.

Grant, O Lord, unto those who fear Thy Name, a happiness that shall endure forever, that by their deeds and by their life, they may lay up in store for themselves in heaven a harvest of good fruits; through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Sursum Corda

Lift up your hearts! The note of expectancy, of hope, of joy, is struck. After our period of penitence, after the humility of our confession, after our absolution, we take courage. We listen to the promises of God. We grasp them with the hands of faith. We feel the confidence of reinvigorated union. We now turn from ourselves, our pitiful failure, our weakness, and look out of ourselves to the grace of God. We lift our eyes to Him Who is drawing near. We are filled with the expectancy of the approach.

We remember, it may be, the movement in a symphony, when a joyous burst of trumpets signals the coming triumph of a hero. Or, going back to our childhood memories, we recall a moment of intense expectancy when distant music told of the approach of a procession. How tense the moment was! How our eyes were fixed on the distant road, where the procession would soon become visible! Better than all, some of us can remember our first Solemn Mass, when, after the murmurs of the penitent congregation and the solemn words of the promises,

the clear tones of the celebrant rang out in the notes of the Sursum Corda. What a moment that is in the Mass, when invitation of joy and thankfulness passes through the promises of the preface to the burst of adoration of the Sanctus. Lift up your hearts indeed! The whole of one's being is swept into the magnificence of the act in which one is merged.

It creates in one momentarily an attitude of mind and soul which we should at least attempt to stabilize and make permanent, the attitude of expectancy in our religion. There are so many dull lives which we feel are dull, not by any force of external circumstances sterilizing them, but dull because of the lack of any vision, because they fail to see the possibilities of their life. What, we seem to see, is making them so ineffective, so the victims of commonplace routine, is the fact that they are blind to the possibilities of their own life. They want interest brought to them from without. They want amusement purveyed to them. They are spoiled by their lack of self-reliance. You shall see two small boys, one of whom has been brought up under the eye of a watchful mother or nurse. He is followed about wherever he goes, and constantly told what to do, and given things to play with, and as a result has constantly to be amused and cared for. He continues to be a helpless and dependent being until he is well grown. Another boy, almost from birth, is thrown on his own resources. He has no one to help him play; no one whose business it is to amuse him; no one to provide him with toys of all sorts. He must find ways of amusing himself, and he has no difficulty in so doing. He leads a happy, joyous, self-reliant life. So there are people whose religious life is dull and uninspired, who find in their religion at most an obligatory

routine, the fulfilment of which gives them no more than a sense of duty done. They need to get free from the sense of religion as imposed formality and find in it a field of great adventure. After all we find what we look for, and we get what we seek.

An attitude thus of expectancy, a reliance on the grace of God, is an elemental need. We must understand our relation to God—a relation which was established at our Baptism—as the ground of boundless expectancy, the opening of the door to the unsearchable riches. They are not riches which are going to be brought to us without effort on our part. Our Father is very rich, but we are not the idle children of a rich father who provides for us unasked, and we have no spiritual nursemaids to pamper us and relieve us from all effort and bring us up spiritual weaklings. Rather we have all things at our disposal on condition that we have insight enough to understand their meanings and possibilities, and energy enough to acquire them. We are entitled to rely utterly on the riches of God as our spiritual patrimony, to regard the results as His children and heirs and as joint heirs with Christ. But that anything shall come from this relation, it is necessary that we develop the life of the Child of God. That using these years of our probation we start with the talents committed to us, that God in the end may receive of us, not only His own, but His own with usury. Religion is not an operation to which we submit; but a cooperation in which we participate.

What then are we entitled to expect? It is easy to answer, "the grace of God," but that is too vague to help us much just here. Let us try to particularize one or two facts for the sake of definiteness. And I shall put this first: that we are entitled to free access to God.

That, no doubt, seems but a commonplace statement, but it is the commonplace in religion which most needs emphasis at present. One of the great obstacles to teaching religion is the seemingly incurable romanticism of the average human being, who finds interest only in the new and untried.

However, if the last statement be true, it must also be true that men are overlooking the romantic possibilities of the Catholic faith. For what is newer in the experience of the average American, or more untried? One sees the crowds rushing to the latest sensation in the way of heresy or new religion with a feeling that if they are really in search of thrills they could find keener ones in places of easier access. There is a curious conviction, it would seem of wide prevalence, that because a given thing has been a long time in existence we must be familiar with it. The Catholic faith has been in the world nearly two thousand years, and therefore lacks novelty. But is there anything that is less known to far the greater part of the American people? Does the man who passes by the suggestion of Catholicity really have the remotest conception of what it is all about? His sense of familiarity with the Catholic religion will not stand the simplest test; his ignorance of the meaning of the commonest terms is complete.

Therefore we would suggest that it is not necessary to go far afield to find novelty; and we would suggest this, not to the bored person who is seeking novelty, or to the Protestant who condemns Catholicity out of hand (neither of whom is likely to read these pages), but to the Churchman who is not finding much of interest in his religion, and who in consequence is not making any progress in it: who has lasped, not away from the

Church into irreligion, but into a more or less contented acquiescence in what he regards as a fact, that religion is a badge of respectability, or an insurance against the future, and not the present possession of a great truth.

And to go back to the point from which we seem to have wandered, he will find this illumination of the worth of religion in the discovery of God as a living Person whom he may always approach, and to whom he may hopefully submit the guidance of his life. This seems to me the starting-point of all religion; the essence of all faith—the easy access to God as to one who infinitely cares. How much He cares we have just heard in the Comfortable Words; how infinitely He cares we are presently to try to understand in the rehearsal of the very Sacrifice itself. But we only understand that He cares when we have made the personal discovery of the fact in the intimacy of our relation to Him. A single personal problem of life, taken to God as our Father, and dealt with freely and unreservedly there, will do more to illumine our relation with Him and put it on a right and intelligible footing than any amount of theory. You are the child of God. You have every right to expect your Father's interest and aid. When you have acted upon this truth it becomes undeniable to you.

One other point. You, as the child of God, are entitled to the guidance of the Holy Spirit. You may rightly expect to be guided by Him in the conduct of your life. This does not mean that you are to look for supernatural revelations as to your conduct. It does mean that if you humbly submit your life to God's will and try your best to guard against self-will and interested motives, you are always to expect that you will be led to make such decisions as are in accord with God's mind.

We have an unfortunate way of making our decisions first in the light of self-interest, and then praying that God will bless what we have decided to do. I do not believe that that is a very hopeful way of securing the Divine blessing on our conduct. God must be consulted first, must be our confidant and adviser, if we are to expect His cooperation in the execution of the things we have decided to do. We cannot first run into debt and then expect God to endorse our notes.

So much in illustration of what I mean by an attitude of expectancy. I think it would be the general testimony of Christians that such an attitude is justified in experience. Those who have learned "to wait on the Lord," whose lives are constantly and consciously referred to Him, do find that their lives are supported and guided by Him. Day by day they experience His loving care and feel that the decisions they are called upon to make can be made in confidence that they are according to His will. In other words, they have a growing sense of the supernatural background of life. A growing experience of this is a necessary consequence of advance in the spiritual life. That life depends constantly on God, and it advances in growth in the knowledge and love of God. We cannot advance far without becoming conscious of God's action upon us and in us, not in the way of what we call "mystical phenomena" but in our increased absorption in prayer and meditation, and in the deepening serenity of the presence of God.

Thus we learn to rely on God. We learn to turn to Him instinctively in all the circumstances of our lives. He is the one to be consulted first. It is the voice on which we rely for guidance. So life gains in steadiness and in confidence. At first in the life of the Spirit we

walk like a child, hesitatingly and fearfully. But our steps gain in certainty and precision as we go on. In physical life it is self-confidence we gain. We become "sure of ourselves" as we say. The government of our physical actions is pushed down into the unconscious and takes care of itself. In the spiritual life what we learn is not self-reliance, but reliance on God, to live a life of dependence as His children. Still there is a certain analogy, at least likeness, in the two spheres of action. As in the habitual acts of life, breathing, walking and so on, we are governed from the unconscious, so in the spiritual sphere we are guided from the supernatural. The supernatural is the unconscious of the spirit, and spiritual education means being so trained that we are guided in things spiritual from the supernatural by an almost automatic reaction.

Our decisions as to the allowability, or advisability of conduct have not to be weighed and pondered. We decide with the same ease and certainty as that with which we move our hands and feet. Uncertainty and perplexity as to Christian conduct is in fact a mark of immaturity, of imperfect mastery of our material. We are uncertain and hesitant because we have not learned to "walk in the spirit." No doubt we never do arrive at ideal self-mastery. New questions, and new phases of old questions, constantly present themselves. There are times of distress and perplexity when it seems as though the ground were giving way under our feet. What we have been accustomed to rely on fails us. There is a struggle to apply the old principles, which seem no longer to cover the ground. Faith itself, it may be, reels and falters. Then is the time to listen to the voice, "Lift up your hearts," and throw ourselves once more on the source

of all help and strength as we answer, "We lift them up unto the Lord."

So we are brought back to calmness, to sanity. So we are able to front the new situation. We have been in trouble and perplexity before and God has not failed us. God never does fail us. On the contrary He pours new strength into our lives. "They that wait on the Lord shall renew their strength; for they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary, they shall walk, and not faint."

We have found that to be true every time we have tested it. We know, when we consider our lives, that we have only failed when we have not trusted, when we have used our own strength and our own judgment independantly of the mind of God. It is well for us, if we ponder and fix in the mind the lesson of our failures, that ultimately they are failures to rely on the supernatural, on God. They are withdrawals of life from the Divine jurisdiction, with what consequences of disaster our memories will easily tell us.

One great consequence of this growth in spiritual experience, this increasing skill in using the supernatural background, is a growing hopefulness in the face of what life brings to us. One of the temptations of life as we pass away from the unreasoning hopefulness of youth is the temptation to judge the present and future pessimistically. The youthful *élan* which saw all things in terms of immediate conquests has been disappointed; the youthful optimism has revealed itself as imagination and not thought. We are disillusioned as to life and easily pass into a pessimistic state, or that curious state of cynicism so characteristic of a certain stage of im-

mature development. But both the youthful optimism and the succeeding cynicism are impulses rather than reasoned states of mind. When we arrive at a state of spiritual sanity we understand that both our optimism and our pessimism are unjustified. In neither state are we seeing life clearly and whole. When we have had time to take in the whole human scene, and to relate it to its necessary spiritual background, we view it more soberly than in youth, but with increasing hopefulness. We understand that our mistaken estimate of it was mistaken because it was so partial. We were looking for immediate returns in terms of personal profit or pleasure, and we were disappointed by our failure to find an ideal society, or men really wanting one. Or if we had been religiously educated we were tremendously disappointed in the failure of spiritual ideals to grip men: in men's lackadaisical attitude towards what seems to us the fundamental problems of life. Now at length we understand the partialness and fragmentariness of our outlook. We understand that human life is indeed a "tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing" if it end here; if its interests are limited by its material accomplishments, and if its horizon is bounded by the hills of this material universe. Hope comes in, and only comes in, when life expands and overpasses "the flaming ramparts of the world," and pushes its experience out into the silent realms of the supernatural, where it makes contact with God.

O world invisible, we view thee,
O world intangible, we touch thee,
O world unknowable, we know thee,
Inapprehensible, we clutch thee!

When we have conquered this new world, which is the "real world"; when we have grown into this new experience, this hope expands into thanksgiving and joy. We now look out on life and the feeling of depression has vanished, and we say, "Let us give thanks unto our Lord God." And all our nature answers, "It is meet and right so to do." All the darkness and depression passes away and we, in a very real sense, "enter into the joy of the Lord." We feel the energizing throb of the new life, and though much that is hard remains to be faced, we face it in a transformed spirit, in the spirit of those who have received the Spirit and know the Lord.

Joy is at once an acquisition that we make, and a gift of God to us. When we respond to the grace of God and fight our way to spiritual victory we experience the joy of those who are "more than conquerors" and the reward is that supernatural gift of the Spirit, which is joy in the Holy Ghost. Not mere pleasure, or exultation, or the sense of success in the triumphing over difficulties, but a sense of the Divine approbation which crowns our efforts and pacifies our lives.

It is necessary that we push on to the stage of spiritual acquisition. Otherwise our lives will remain unquiet and restless in the sense of their emptiness. The spiritual life cannot stop short of fruit. The planting and the watering are preparatory to the increase. This God alone can give. But He gives it to those who, by the faithful use of grace, have fitted themselves to use it. One fancies sometimes that there are fruits of the spirit of which we have small appreciation, and such a one is joy. Happiness we understand and long after. For it we are willing to sacrifice much. Pleasure we seek with

unappeased appetite. However, it is the common experience that what we gain is

That unrest which men mis-call delight.

It is no doubt easy to insist on the limitations of pleasure and its incapacity to insure happiness. A novelist of the last century chose for his epitaph these words, which embody a universal experience. "I had much pleasure, but I have never been happy." This failure is commonly due to a confusion of values. The value that is prominent is not pleasure, nor happiness, but that gift of the Spirit, which is joy. It is at this that we aim in the spiritual life. It is this which crowns our spiritual development. Whatever the world may think of religion, one of its prime ends is joy. And the saint must achieve this, or his sanctity is not complete. In the process of canonization the official who has charge of the investigation is instructed to ask whether the servant of God whose canonization is sought showed himself habitually joyful, and the religious view of the matter is summed up in the traditional saying, "A saint that is sad is a sad saint." There is a story of a poor little sick girl, who was taken ill one Christmas and taken to the hospital. While there she heard the story of Jesus coming to save the world. It was all new to her and she was fascinated by it. One day when the nurse came around the girl said, "I have been having such good times here, but I suppose I shall have to go away. But I am going to take some of the good time with me. Do you know about Jesus being born?"

"Yes," said the nurse, "but keep quiet. Don't talk any more."

"You do?" said the child. "I thought you looked as if you didn't, and I was going to tell you."

"Why, how did I look?" asked the nurse.

"Oh, just like most folks, kind of glum. I shouldn't think you would ever look glum if you knew about Jesus being born."

Joy, in the complete sense, can only be experienced in the unified life. So many Christians "look kind of glum" because they haven't experienced escape from the torture of a divided life. "Torture" may seem a strong word, but in reality it is not too strong to express the fact with many a life we all know; especially all priests know so many people whose life is a long struggle between inclination and ideal knowledge. The ideal has never become the inclination. In such lives Christianity is a taste, and not a passion, and can Christianity ever master anyone until it becomes a passion? Those who are hungry for the world, who have unsatisfied craving for amusement, can never see the joy of the Christian life. They glimpse Christian values as the traveller glimpses the far-off mountains from the window of the moving train. They give an impression of beauty, but the impression is too fleeting to last. It is only when we have effected a choice which rules us and puts in a subordinate place values other than spiritual that these latter values so far master us as to fill our hearts with joy and gladness.

And what a joy that is, the joy of those who have found the great treasure. They can now look out upon the world with eyes that see it clearly. They have lost the unfounded optimism of youth, and so all values with terms of immediate gratification and within reach of those who serve the world faithfully. They have lost the pessimism, which is the natural reaction of the failure

of youthful dreams. Because they dream wrongly about the world they do not therefore conclude that the world has no value. It has great value, and it has great value to them. Only now they see it to be the value of an instrument and not of an end. It even contains joy of its own, which they can enter into and use. "All joys that belong to the order of Providence can, for the children of God, be instruments of grace. . . . In the soul that is in the state of grace every joy that is not forbidden, and with which no sin mingles, becomes divine." We do not forsake the world; we use the world, and we use it to more purpose and with more profit precisely because we own no illusions as to the character of its values. For the present our place is in the world, where we ought to ply our trade as the merchants of God, where we ought to use the talents wherewith we are endowed to earn the merits which shall solicit the rich reward of God's grace. But all the time of our pilgrimage here, while we are going about the world in our daily task as those whose time is short, and who look for the return of their Master, we go gladly and joyfully as those

> Who carry music in their heart,
> Through dusty lane and wrangling mart,
> Plying their daily task with busier feet,
> Because their secret souls a holier strain repeat.